5533

Walk Around

SBD Dauntless

Don Greer

Walk Around Number 33

squadron/signal publications

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By Richard S. Dann
Color by Don Greer and Richard S. Dann
Illustrated by Darren Glenn and David Gebhardt

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Introduction

The Douglas **SBD Dauntless** scout/dive-bomber was an evolutionary, not a revolutionary aircraft design. Its design roots stemmed back to a pair of 1934 Northrop designs: the US Army's A-17 and the US Navy's BT-1. One just has to look at the wing planform to note the obvious similarities. Even in the early development stages, the SBD suffered from a case of terminal obsolescence. When it was placed into service in late 1940, the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver – its intended replacement – had been in flight test for some time. Nevertheless, with unanticipated delays in Helldiver production, the US Marine Corps ordered 57 **SBD-1**s and the Navy ordered 87 improved **SBD-2**s.

When war finally came to the United States on 7 December 1941, the Dauntless was the Navy and Marine Corps' primary strike aircraft and maintained this stature through the end of 1942, when newer designs reached production status. It was the Battle of Midway on 4-7 June 1942 that will forever cement the Dauntless into United States military history. During this battle, two squadrons of SBDs from the carriers USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6) and USS YORKTOWN (CV-5) turned the tide of the Pacific War by destroying four Imperial Japanese Navy fleet carriers.

While the Navy was the largest SBD operator, it must be remembered that the Marine Corps also flew the Dauntless during the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific. Additionally, the US Army Air Forces also flew them, under the designation of **A-24 Banshee**. While the Army never did fully embrace dive-bombing as an effective tactic, they did fly them in combat; however, the type was primarily used in the utility role. Interestingly, the last of the type were US Air Force **F-24** Banshees, with at least one in the inventory as late as June of 1950.

Besides the domestic operators, the SBD/A-24 saw combat with the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the French Air Force and Navy. Mexico purchased 30 SBDs and Chile bought 12 examples. Britain's Royal Navy and Royal Air Force evaluated it and Costa Rica purchased one, but it crashed on takeoff during its delivery flight.

Had this book been written 15 year ago, there would have been virtually no airframes to photograph. The sheer numbers salvaged from the Great Lakes mean there is now at least one of each sub-variant (SBD-1 through **SBD-6**) either on display or awaiting restoration.

This book would not have been as complete had it not been for Peter C. Smith in the UK or Kevin and Roma Smith in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Kevin is restoring a Dauntless, which was once a wind machine for MGM Studios.

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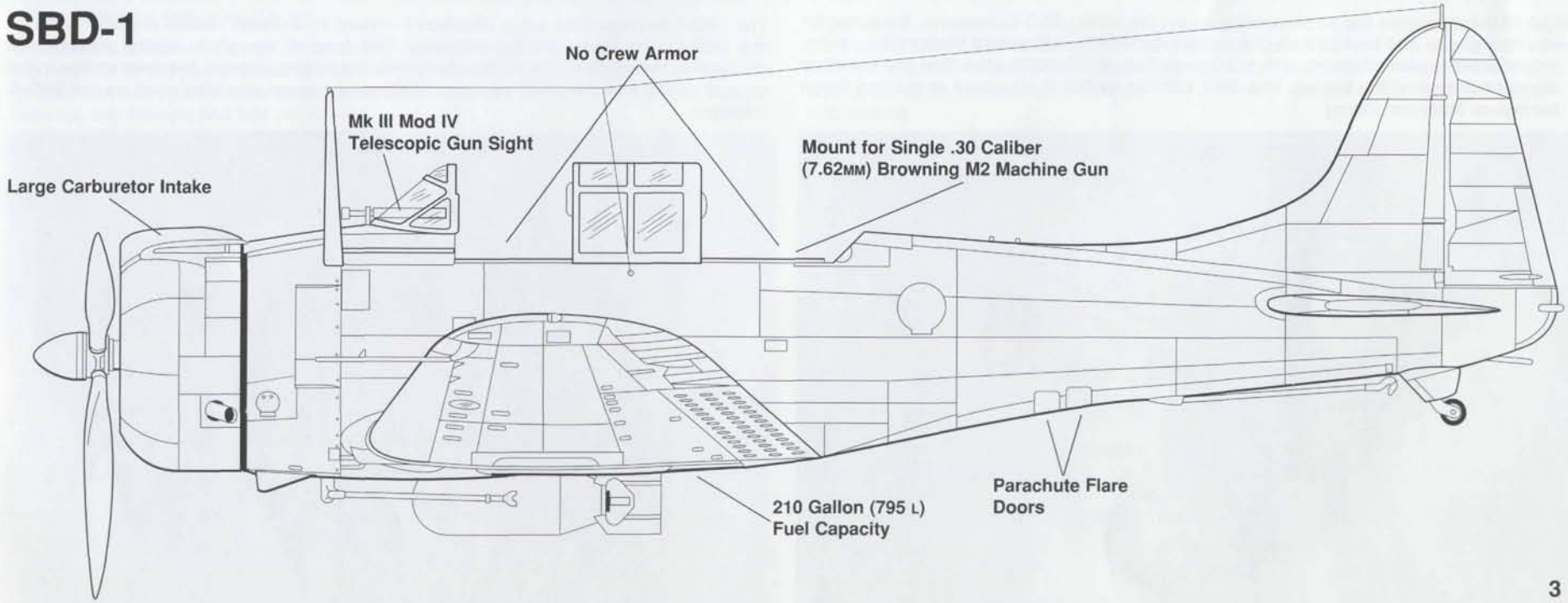
(Front Cover) Three Bombing Squadron Sixteen (VB-16) SBD-5s – led by LT Cook Cleland (pilot) and Radioman 2nd Class William Hisler in aircraft 17 – return to the second USS LEXINGTON (CV-16) on 20 June 1944. The strike aircraft launched late that afternoon over the Philippine Sea returned to the battle group well after dark. Many aircraft ditched, while others landed on any available deck. Cleland recovered on USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6).

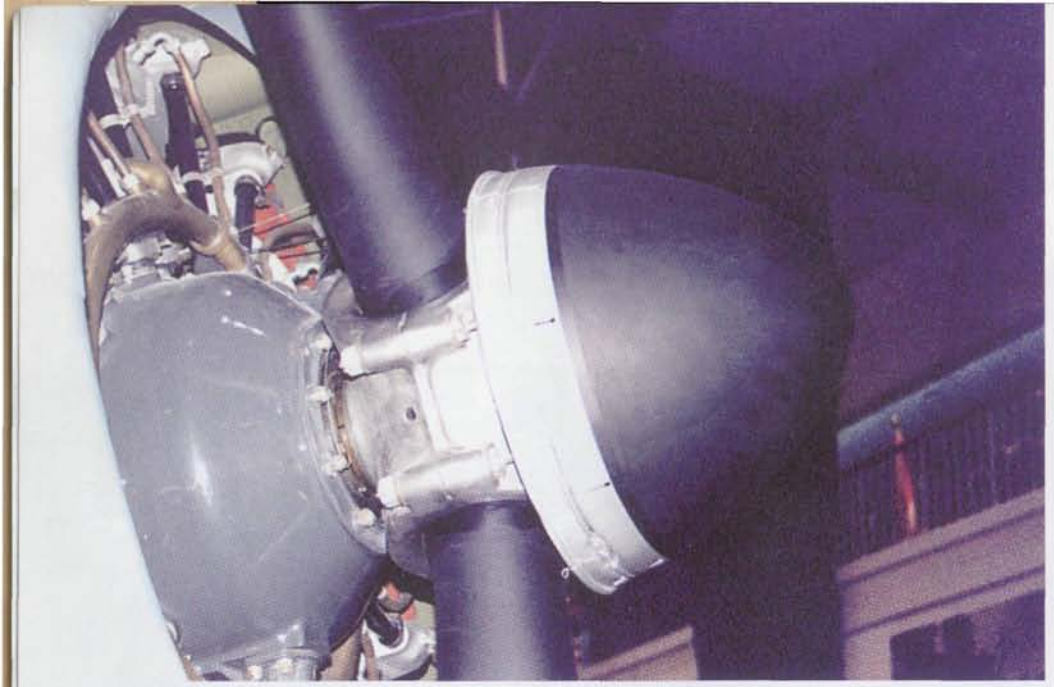
(Previous Page) This SBD-5 Dauntless (82, S-9) is owned by the Lone Star Flight Museum in Galveston, Texas. The aircraft is actually an A-24B Banshee (42-54682) modified to SBD-5 configuration with a tail hook. (Phillips)

(Rear Cover) LT Richard Best's SBD-3 (B1, BuNo 4689) leads the first section of VB-6 off ENTERPRISE during the Battle of Midway on 4 June 1942. In the 4 June morning mission, Best in B1, ENS Kroger in B2, and ENS Weber in B3 attacked Imperial Japanese Naval Ship (IJNS) AKAGI and struck IJNS HIRYU that afternoon. These sorties would be Best's final flights. He inhaled caustic soda from the aircraft's oxygen system, which resulted in his medical grounding.

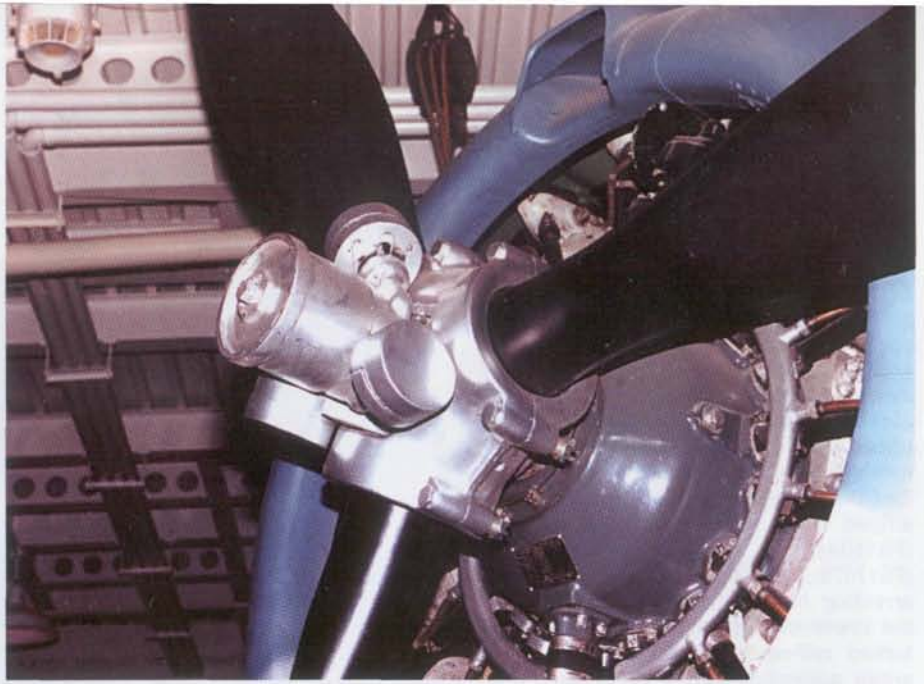
This SBD-1 (2-MB-1, BuNo 1597) was the second production aircraft and it was assigned to Marine Bombing Squadron Two (VMB-2) at Naval Air Station (NAS) North Island in San Diego, California. Distinguishing features of the SBD-1 included the factory applied pre-war paint scheme and a large carburetor scoop at the top of the cowling. The Dauntless is painted overall Aluminum (FS17178), with glossy Orange-Yellow (FS13538) upper wing surfaces. Cowl and aft fuselage bands are glossy Insignia Red (FS11136), while the rudder is striped (from front) Insignia Blue (FS15044), Insignia White (FS17875), and Insignia Red. The arresting hook is not installed on the lower aft fuselage. The SBD-1 lacked self-sealing fuel tanks and armor protection for the crew, and was not considered combat worthy. Its fuel capacity was 210 gallons (795 L). (NMNA)

SBD-1



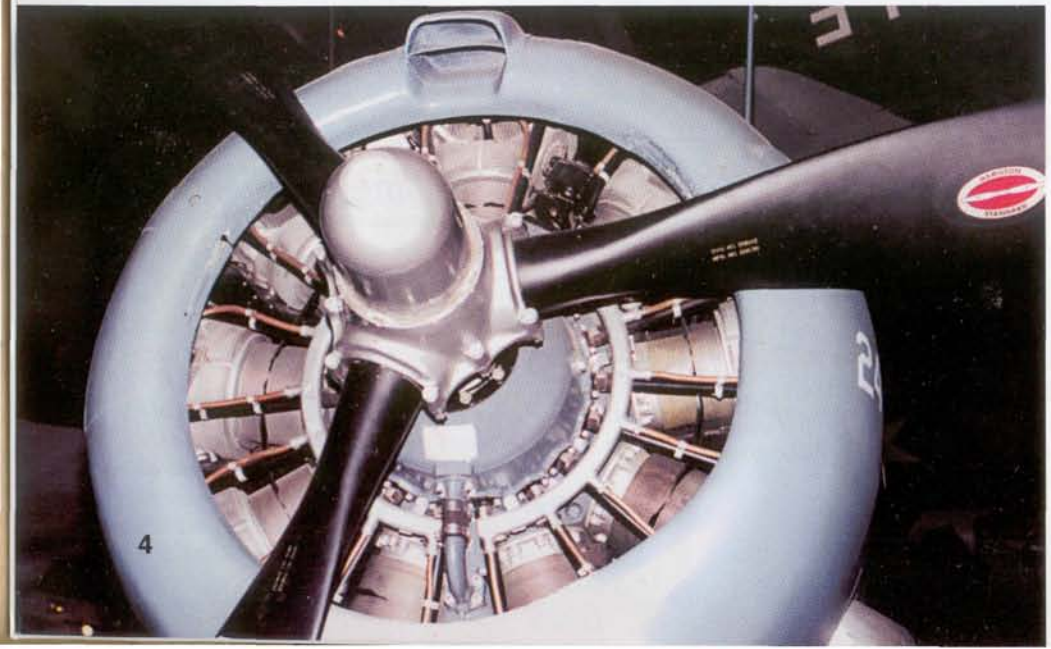


The SBD-1 through -3 variants had an aerodynamic spinner covering the counterweights on the three-bladed Hamilton Standard constant speed propeller. This spinner is Non-Specular (NS) Black (FS37038), with a natural metal rim. Occasionally, this spinner was left off the Dauntless while in service. (Dann)

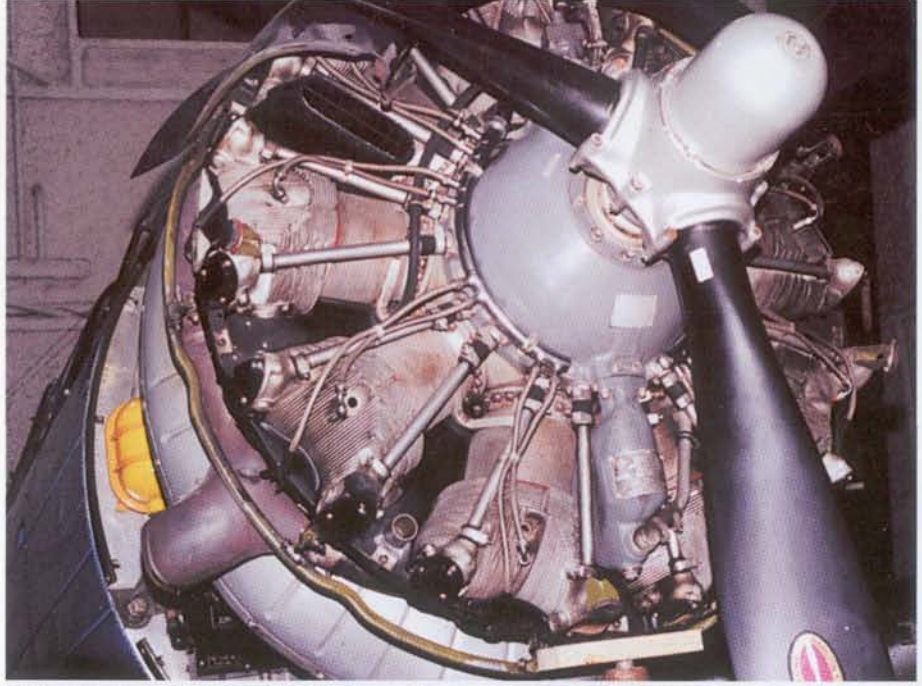


SBD-1s through -3s were equipped with a 10 foot 9 inch (3.28 M) diameter Hamilton Standard constant speed propeller. Three counterweights are placed at 120° intervals around the hub. Centrifugal forces generated by the counterweights adjust propeller pitch. The carburetor intake is located on the upper cowling lip. (Dann)

The SBD-4 employed the same cowling as on the earlier SBD-3; however, the propeller was changed to a 10 foot 10 inch (3.3 M) diameter Hamilton Standard Hydromatic device. Propeller blades are NS Black, with NS Orange-Yellow (FS33538) stenciling and Hamilton Standard decals on the blades. This SBD-4 (BuNo 06900) is displayed at the San Diego Aerospace Museum. (Dann)



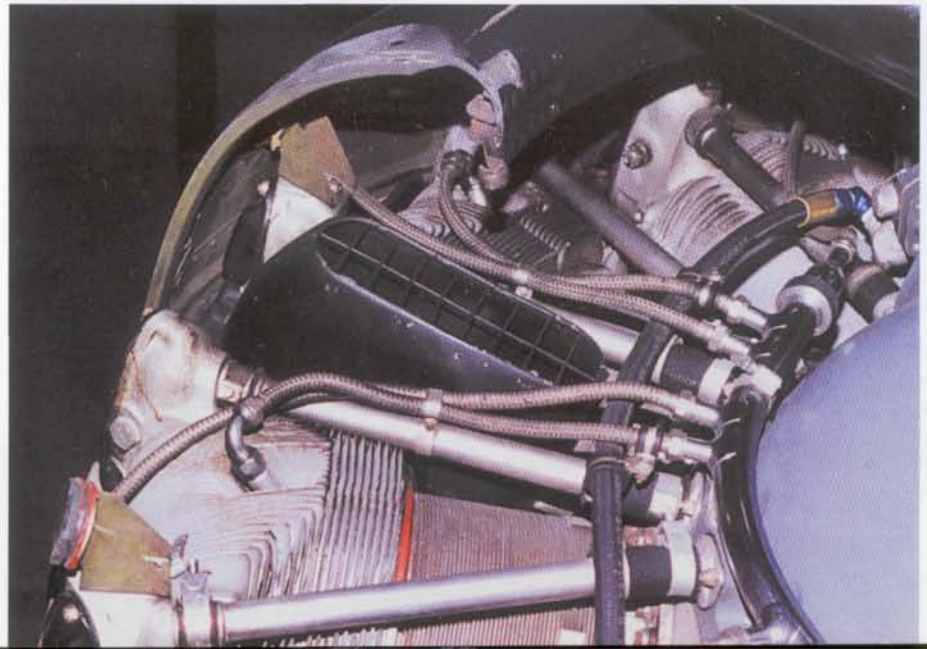
The SBD-5 employed the same Hamilton Standard Hydromatic domed propeller used on the SBD-4. The dome on the propeller hub housed the pitch control mechanism. Carburetor induction was also changed, with the intakes located between engine cylinders at the 10 and 2 o'clock positions. This arrangement was also used on the SBD-6. (Phillips)



This SBD-5's engine cowling is removed to expose the 1200 HP Wright R-1820-60 Cyclone nine-cylinder, air-cooled, radial engine. The powerplant turned a three-bladed Hamilton Standard Hydromatic variable-pitch propeller. This same propeller also equipped the earlier SBD-4 and later SBD-6 variants. Both the forward crankcase and the oil sump assembly are painted a dark gray. (Dann)

The dome assembly for the Hamilton Standard Hydromatic propeller housed the pitch control mechanism. Engine oil pressure is used to change the blades' pitch. The propeller governor is located on a mounting pad just aft of the hub. This governor held the propeller at a constant speed. (Dann)

The SBD-5/6 carburetor filtered air induction system consisted of two oval intakes, including this one to starboard. Cowling supports are attached to the top of the cylinder. The ignition harness encircles the forward crankcase and has leads for two spark plugs per cylinder, one forward and one aft. (Dann)

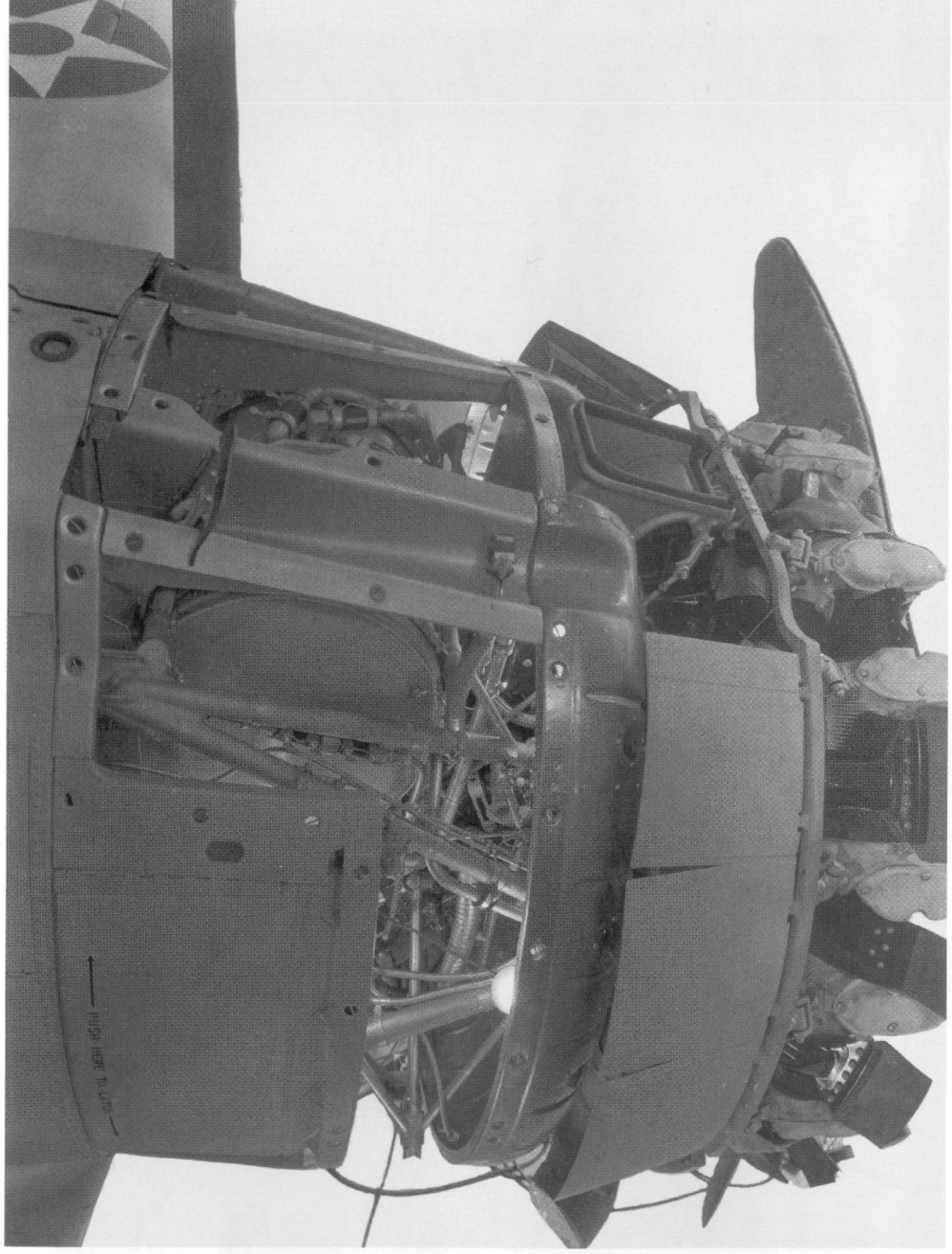


The SBD-5/6 aircraft had a single cowl flap on either side of the cowling. The cowl flaps are hydraulically actuated via the cowl flap selector valve near the left side of the lower instrument panel. A single cowl flap-actuating rod projects from the engine accessory area. Ducting for the carburetor filtered air induction is located under the exhaust manifold. (Dann)

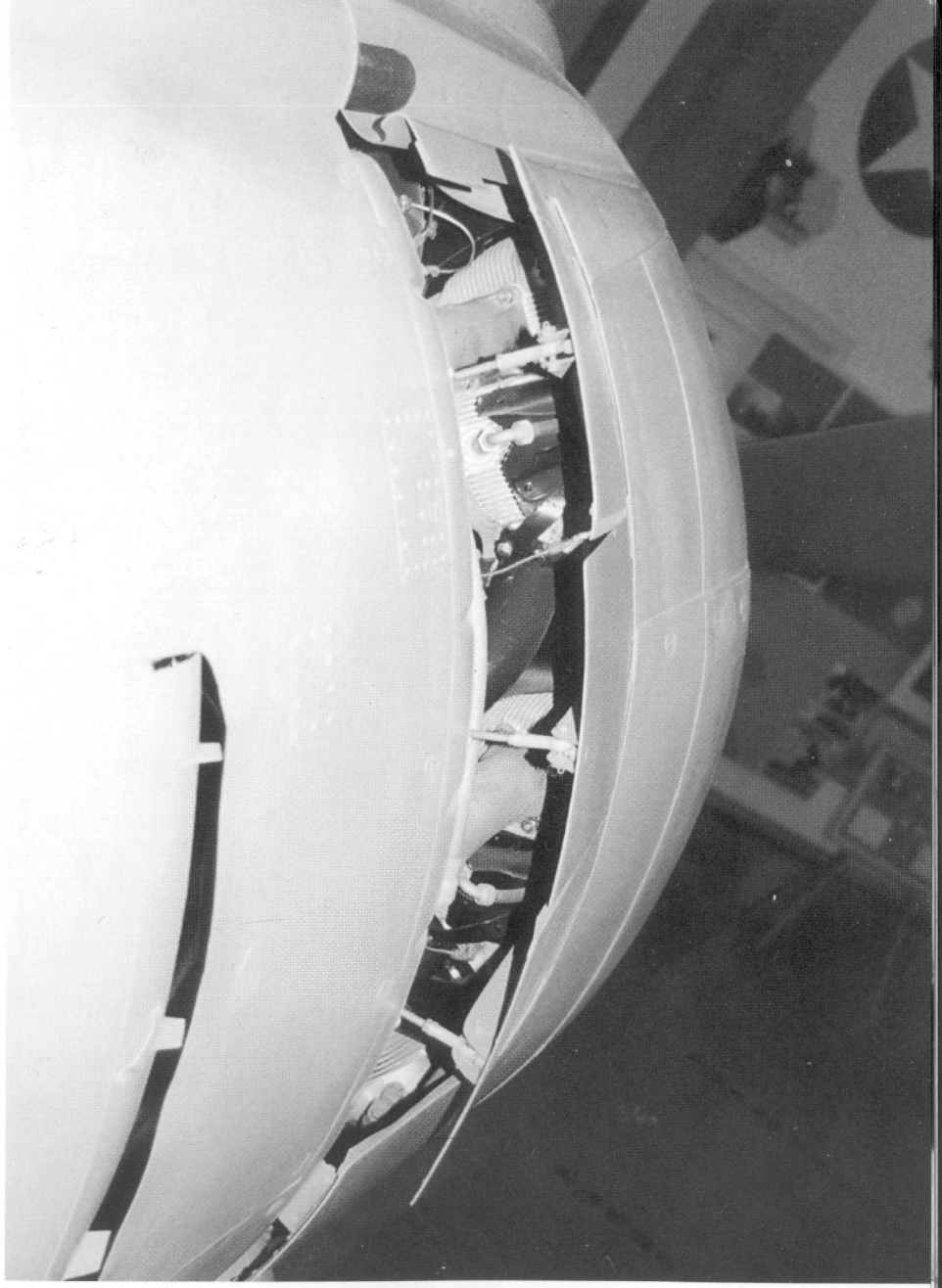
Three SBD-1s assigned to Marine Bombing Squadron One (VMB-1) fly in formation in 1940 or early 1941. The aircraft closest to the camera (1-MB-7, BuNo 1616) has True Blue (FS15102) Third Section markings while the second aircraft (1-MB-4, BuNo 1606) has Insignia White (FS17875) Second Section markings. NS Black anti-glare panels are painted on the upper fuselage ahead of the windshield. VMB-1 was assigned to Marine Air Group One (MAG-1) at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Quantico, Virginia. (SDAM)

This SBD-1 (2-MB-1, BuNo 1597) has deployed its landing flaps while carrying a 500 pound (227 KG) bomb on the centerline. This aircraft is assigned to the Commanding Officer (CO) of VMB-2 at NAS North Island. First Section markings of this aircraft are glossy Insignia Red (FS11136). The US Marine Corps (USMC) insignia is painted on the mid-fuselage side. (SDAM)

An SBD-1 (132-B-4) of Marine Scout Bombing Squadron One Thirty Two (VMSB-132, formerly VMB-1) flies from Quantico in mid-1941. This Dauntless is painted overall NS Light Gray (FS36440), which became the standard US Navy and Marine aircraft scheme from 30 December 1940. Markings are NS Insignia White (FS37875) on the aircraft. National insignias are painted on the upper port and lower starboard wing surfaces and the fuselage sides. (SDAM)



Removal of access panels reveals the engine accessory section's upper area in this Douglas factory photograph. The engine oil tank mounted under the upper decking had a 19.5 gallon (74 L) capacity for non-combat conditions. The filler cap atop this tank is accessible through an inspection panel. Engine mounting struts are fitted to the stainless steel firewall, while the carburetor induction manifold is located atop the fuselage between the cowl flaps. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

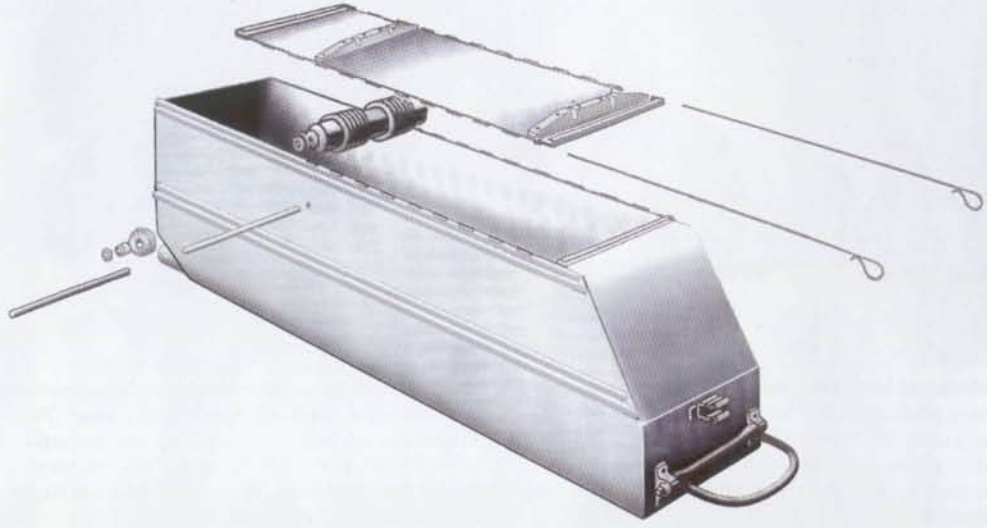


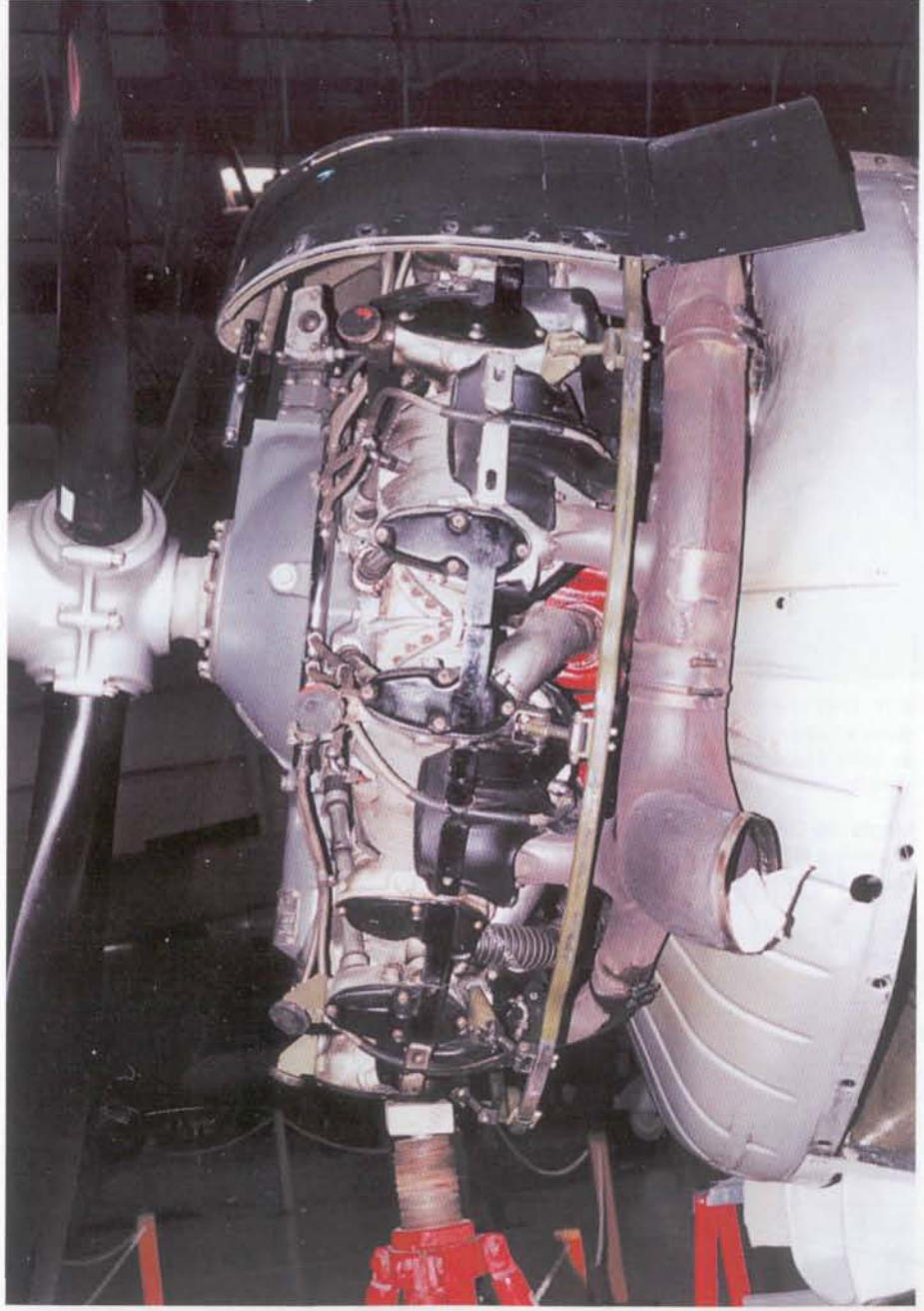
The starboard cowl flaps are opened on this SBD-2. Individual control rods position the cowl flaps from fully closed through fully opened settings. The pilot hydraulically actuates the cowl flaps using the actuating cylinder and bell crank assembly located in the engine accessory area. Exhaust and intake manifolds and inter-cylinder baffling for proper engine cooling are located inside the cowling. (Dann)

The accessory cowling is opened on this SBD-2 (BuNo 2106). The starboard ammunition box is fitted into its opening aft of the accessory section. SBD-1s and -2s are identified by the small panel at the bottom of the accessory cooling vent. Just forward of this panel is the inertia starter and its mount. A hand crank fitted to the inertia starter mount was sometimes used to start the Dauntless' engine, in place of the electric starter in the cockpit. (Dann)

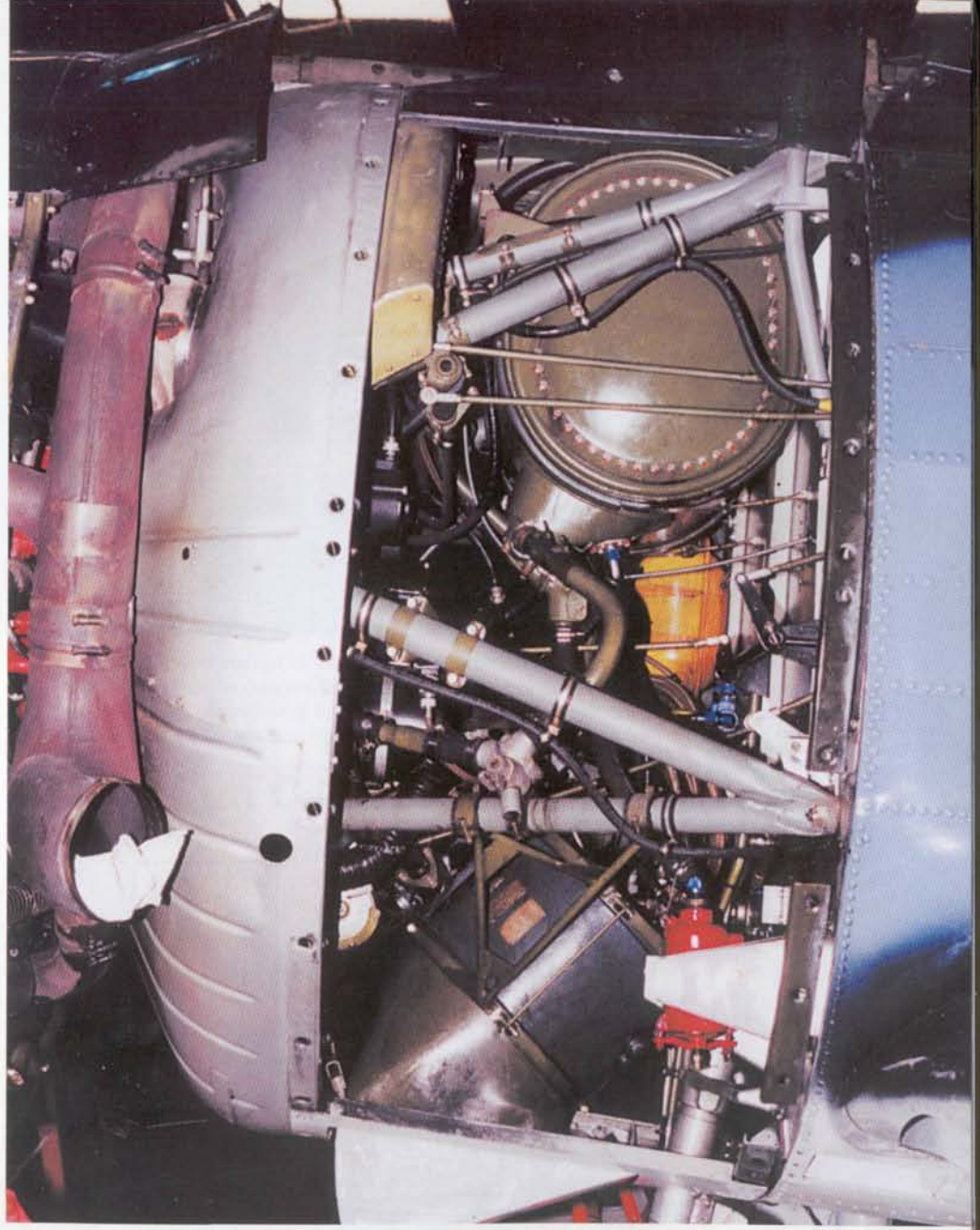
The SBD series was equipped with two fixed-forward firing .50 caliber (12.7MM) Browning M2 machine guns firing through the propeller arc. Ammunition was stored in 180 round metal boxes that slid into this opening immediately aft of the engine accessory section. Belted ammunition was fed through feed chutes to the machine gun's breech. (Dann)

Fixed Gun Ammunition Box





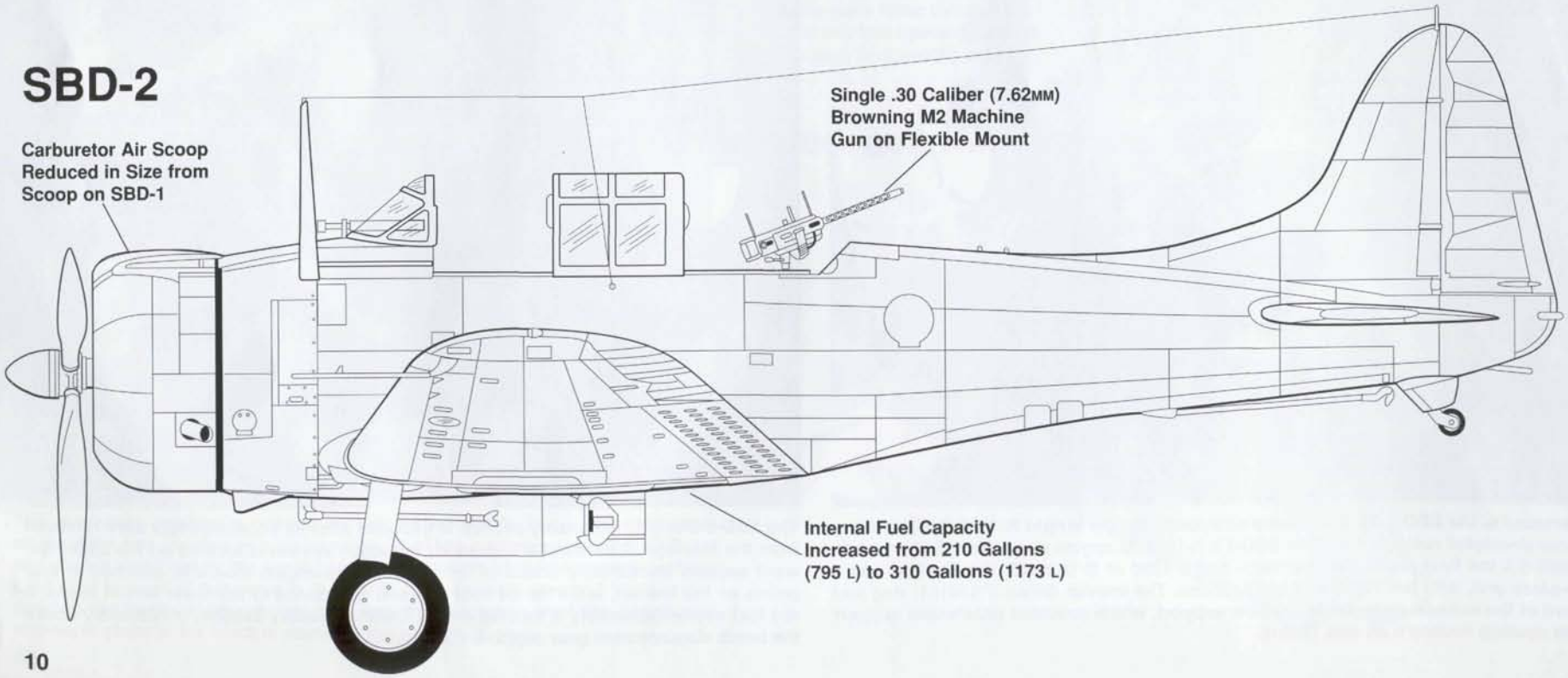
All versions of the SBD/A-24 series were equipped with the Wright R-1820 Cyclone nine-cylinder air-cooled radial engine. The SBD-1's R-1820-32 engine developed 1000 HP, while the SBD-6 – the final production variant – had a 1350 HP R-1820-66. The cowling was a three-piece unit, with left, right, and top sections. The Interior Green (FS34151) ring just forward of the exhaust collector is the bow support, which provided attachment support for the cowling section's aft end. (Dann)



The SBD-5's engine accessory section is exposed after its access panels were removed from the fuselage. A carburetor filtered air induction system is located on the upper forward section, immediately ahead of the oil tank. The engine mount is attached at four points on the firewall, while the oil cooler mount is fastened to the lower mount struts. A red fuel strainer assembly is located on the lower accessory section, immediately above the bomb displacement gear support. (Dann)

This SBD-2 (BuNo 2102) was the first of 87 SBD-2s delivered by Douglas to the US Navy in December of 1940. The most recognizable change to the airframe was a smaller carburetor air inlet. The SBD-2 – like the SBD-1 – lacked self-sealing fuel tanks and crew armor, but its 310 US Gallons (1173 L) fuel capacity was 100 gallons (379 L) greater than the previous variant. Propeller blades were left in natural metal, except for the NS Black rear faces and the tri-color tips. These tips were painted (from inboard) Insignia Blue, Orange-Yellow, and Insignia Red. The sole surviving SBD-2 (BuNo 2106) was recovered from Lake Michigan and underwent a complete restoration. It was placed on display at the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Florida in May of 2001. (SDAM)

SBD-2

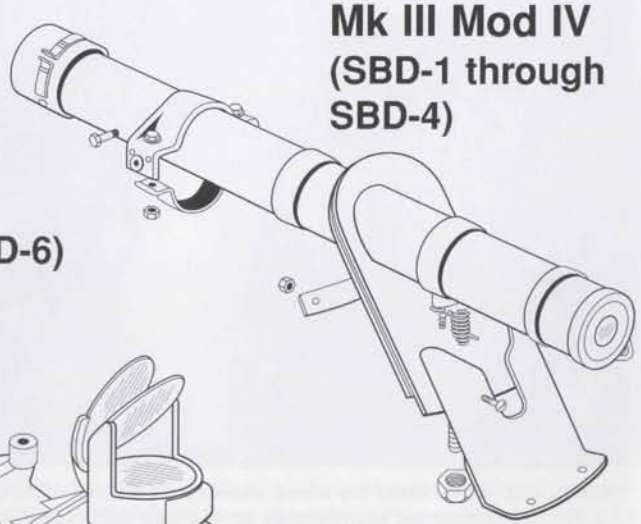

Carburetor Air Scoop Reduced in Size from Scoop on SBD-1
Single .30 Caliber (7.62MM) Browning M2 Machine Gun on Flexible Mount
Internal Fuel Capacity Increased from 210 Gallons (795 L) to 310 Gallons (1173 L)

An NS Light Gray SBD-3 (2) runs up to full power just prior to a deck launch in 1941. This Dauntless is equipped with the Mk 2-1 gun camera mount just forward of the pilot's cockpit. The AN-N4 gun camera has not been fitted to this mount. This camera was turned on whenever the gun trigger was pulled. It was used to confirm aerial victories and educate pilots on aerial attack techniques. (NMNA)

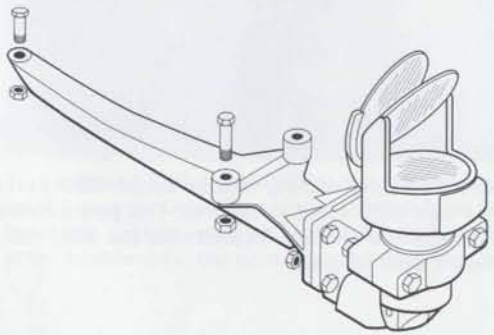
A Mk 2-1 gun camera mount is fitted on the starboard fuselage of this VB-5 SBD (5-B-7). The camera operated in conjunction with either the bomb release or the fixed forward firing machine guns, depending on the camera's switch position. The electrical conduit used to power the camera was stowed in the gunner's cockpit when not in use. (NMNA)

Gun Sights

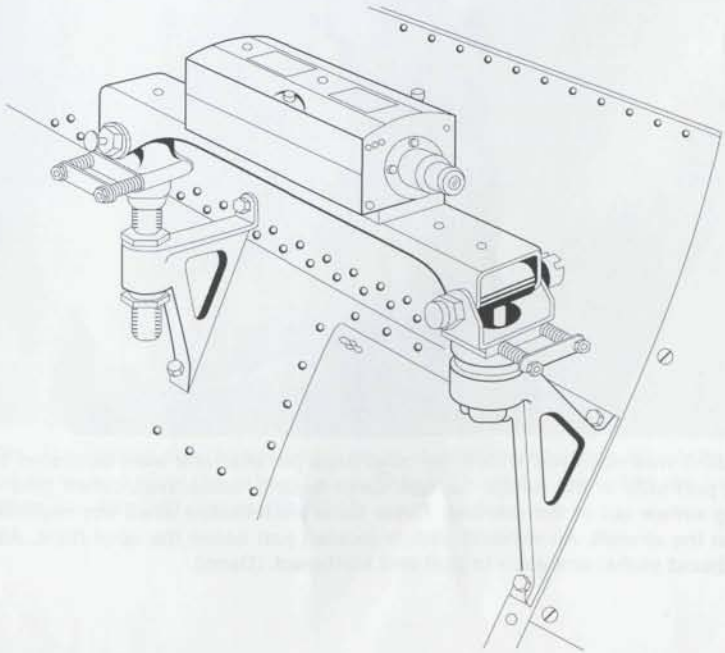
Mk III Mod IV (SBD-1 through SBD-4)



Mk VIII (SBD-5 and SBD-6)



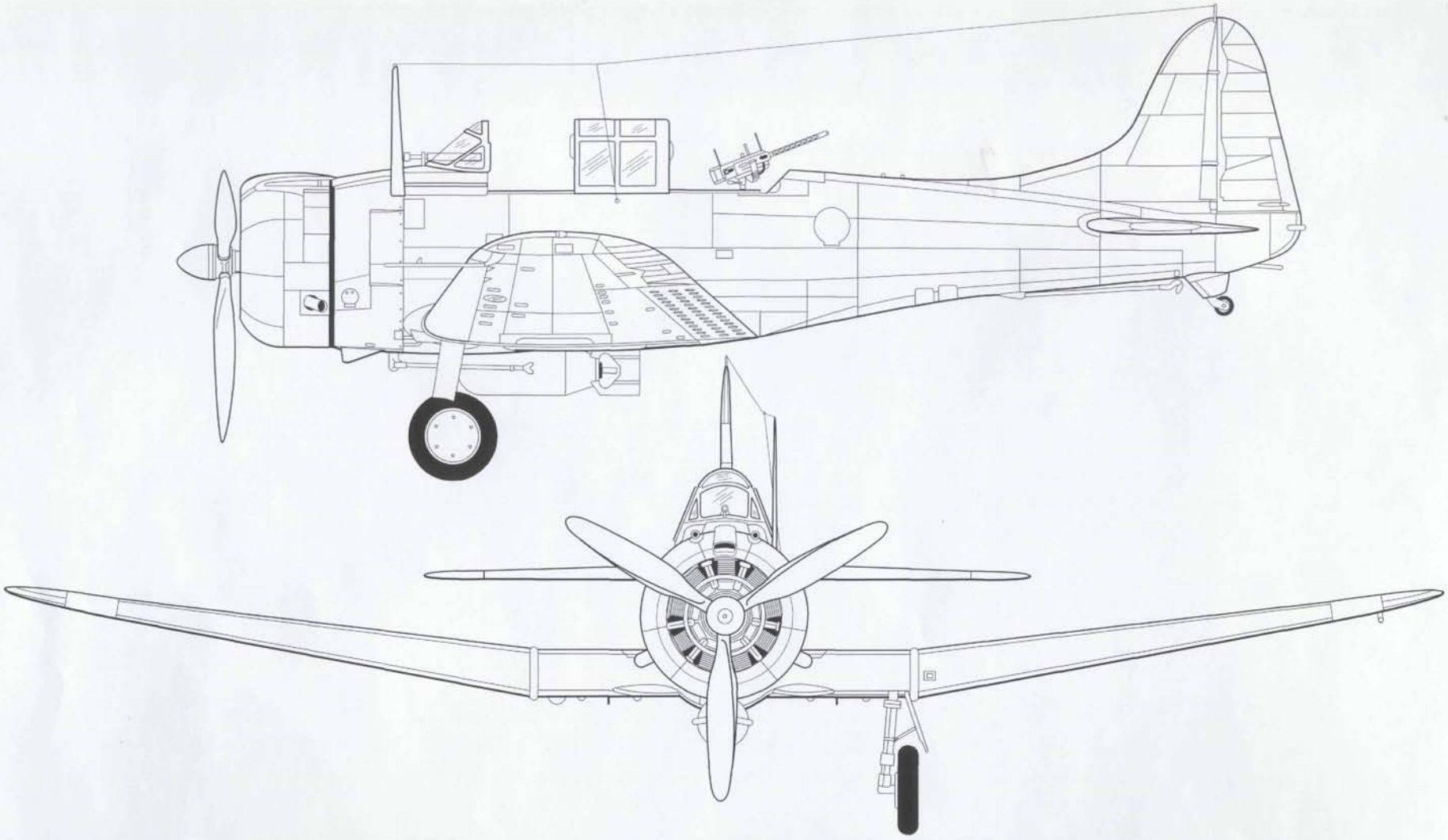
AN-N4 Gun Camera and Mk 2-1 Mount



The SBD-3 was equipped with three cowl flaps per side and were activated by a control on the port side of the pilot's cockpit. Cowl flaps — sometimes called gills – regulated cooling airflow out of the cowling. These flaps were closed when not required to reduce drag on the aircraft. An exhaust stub is located just below the cowl flaps. All SBDs had two exhaust stubs, one each to port and starboard. (Dann)

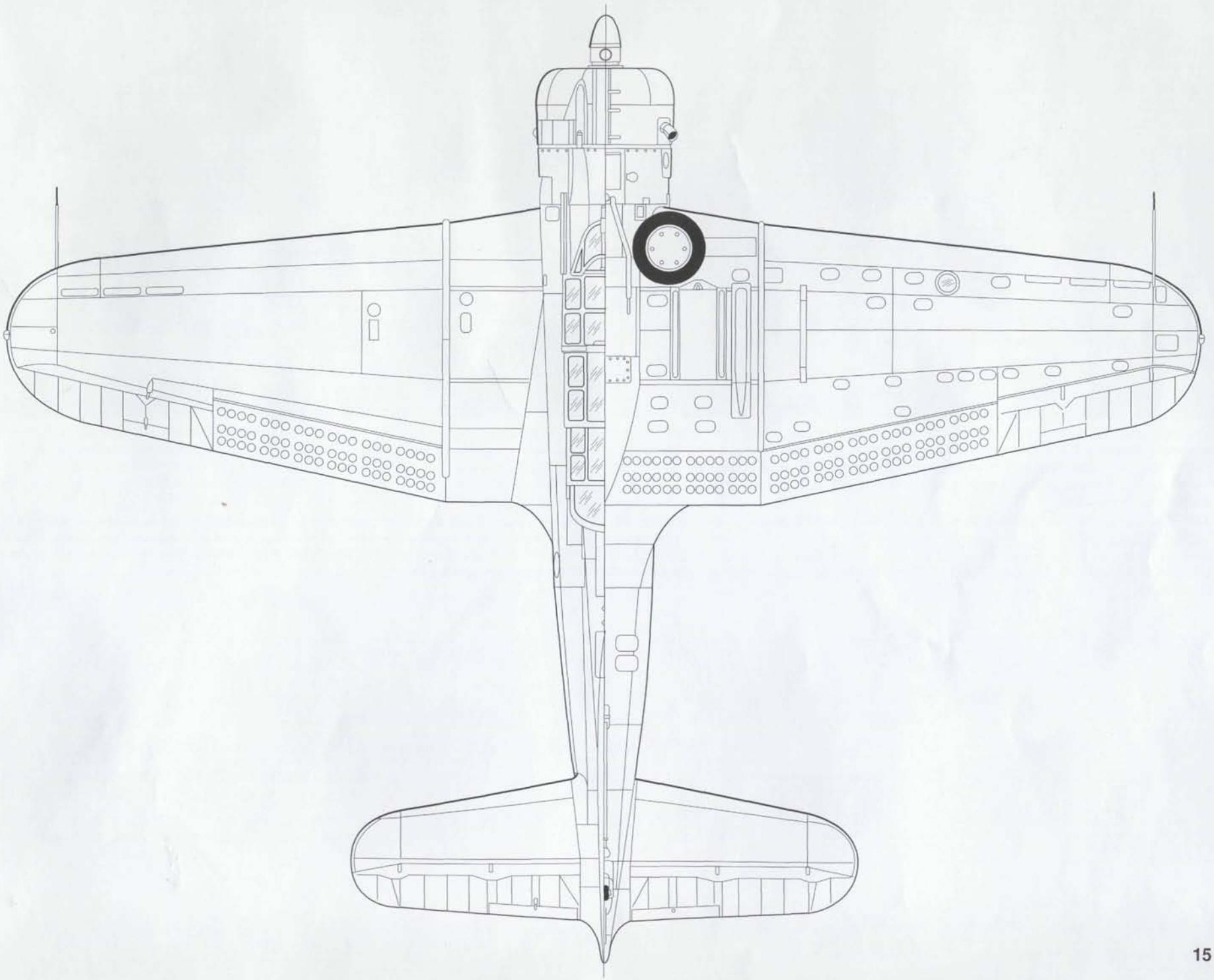
SBD-3s and -4s retained the same accessory cowling cooling vent as earlier SBD-1 and -2s. This vent changed significantly on the later SBD-5 and -6 variants. The port forward firing machine gun spent shell and ammunition link chute is located near the wing root. An identical chute is located on the starboard side. (Dann)

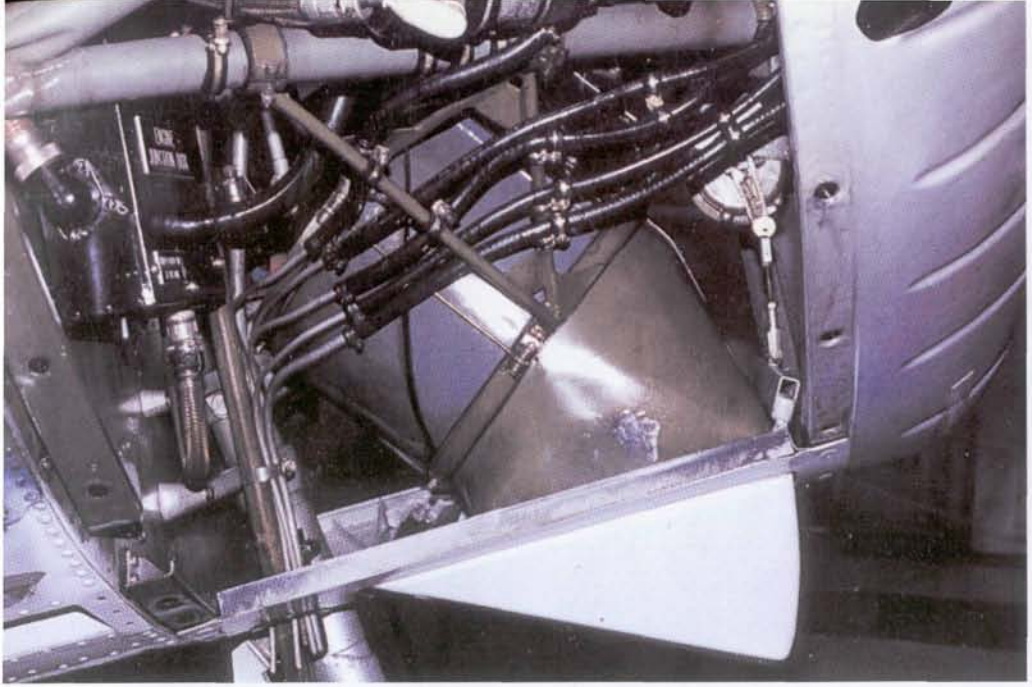
This restored SBD-5 (A-24B) has the late production configuration for the Dauntless' forward fuselage. Cowl flaps were reduced from three per side to only one. The carburetor induction system was redesigned to eliminate the upper lip intake found on earlier variants. Additionally, the accessory cowling was modified with a taller cooling slot than on earlier SBDs. The inertial starter opening hole is located immediately aft of the engine cowling and above and aft of the exhaust stub. This SBD-5 (82) is owned by the Lone Star Flight Museum in Galveston, Texas. (Phillips)



Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless/A-24 Banshee Specifications

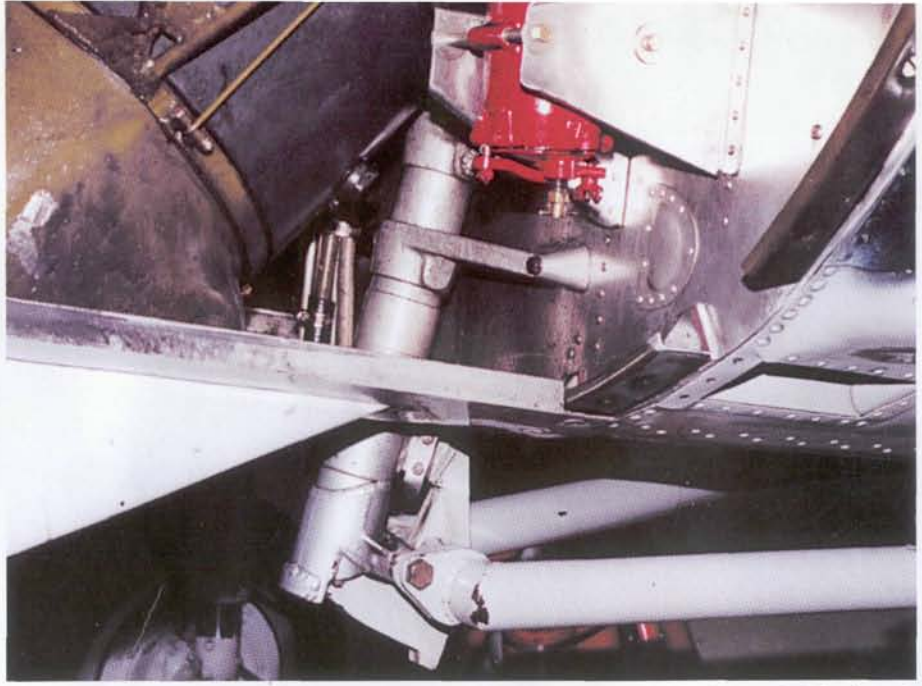
Wingspan:.....41 feet 7 inches (12.7 M)
Length:.....32 feet 1 inch (9.8 M)
Height:.....13 feet 7 inches (4.1 M)
Empty Weight:.....6345 pounds (2878 KG)
Maximum Weight:.....10,400 pounds (4717 KG)
Powerplant:.....One 1000 HP Wright R-1820-52 Cyclone nine-cylinder, air-cooled, radial engine
Offensive Armament:..Up to one 1600 pound (726 KG) bomb on centerline rack, and up to two 325 pound (147 KG) bombs on wing racks
Defensive Armament:.Two cowl-mounted .50 caliber (12.7MM) Browning M2 machine guns with 360 rounds per gun (RPG), and either one .30 caliber (7.62MM) Browning M2 machine gun with 600 RPG or two .30 caliber M2 machine guns with 2000 RPG on a flexible aft cockpit mount
Maximum Speed:.....250 MPH (402 KMH)
Service Ceiling:.....27,100 feet (8260 M)
Maximum Range:.....Bombing – 1345 miles (2165 KM); Scouting – 1580 miles (2543 KM)
Crew:.....Two





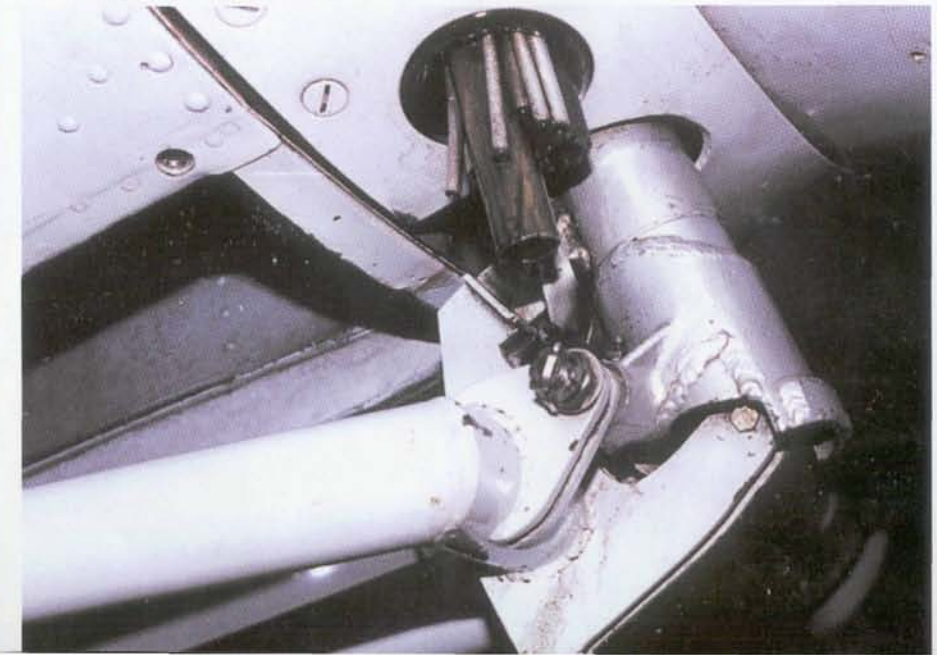
The oil cooler is located on the lower edge of the engine accessory section. It is fastened to a mounting bracket that is located on the lower engine mount struts. The bomb displacement gear assembly for centerline mounted ordnance is located immediately aft of the oil cooler. A series of liquid drains exit the fuselage just to starboard of the bomb displacement gear. (Dann)

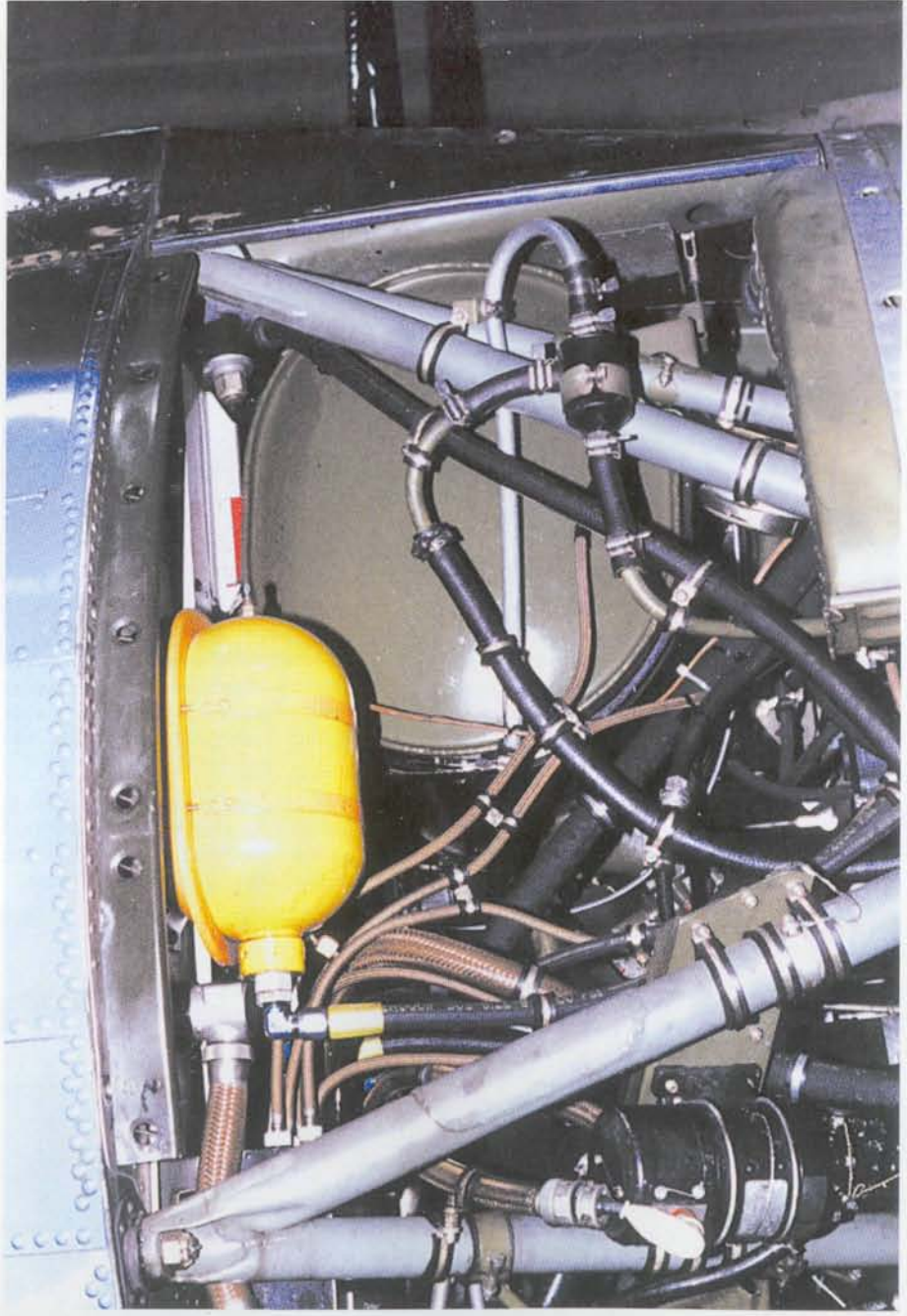
The pilot used a control under the main instrument panel to adjust the oil cooling air scoop. Opening this scoop allowed air to enter the cooler, but also slightly increased drag. The honeycomb oil cooler mounted aft of the scoop opening allowed air to circulate and cool the engine oil. The mounting bracket for the bomb displacement gear is also visible. (Dann)



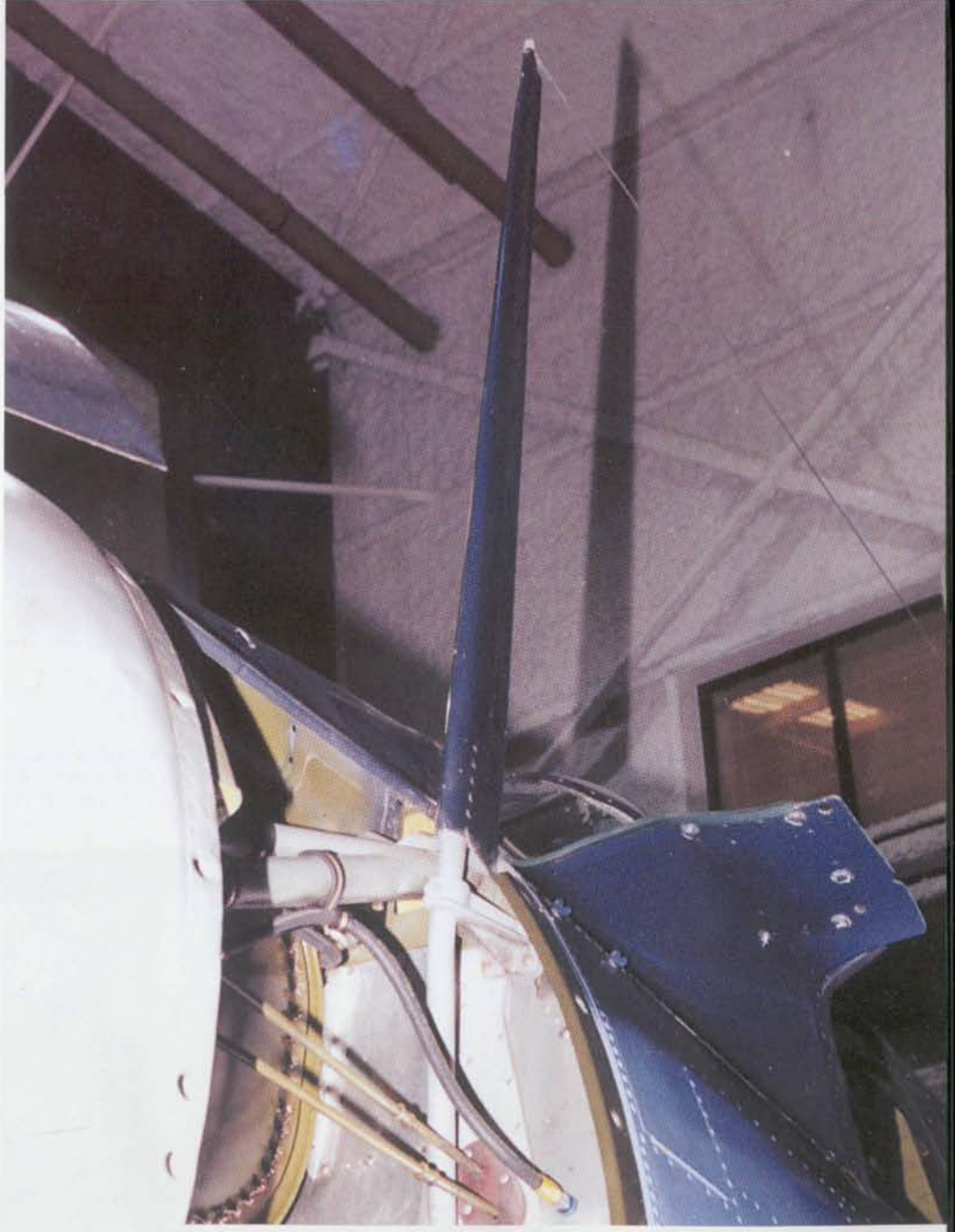
The oil cooler for all Dauntless variants was positioned immediately forward of the bomb displacement gear. Oil was circulated through the cooler before being pumped back into the engine. A fuel strainer is the red object mounted to the firewall beside the displacement gear. This strainer filtered out dirt and other contaminants before the fuel flowed into the engine. (Dann)

The SBD's bomb displacement gear met US Navy specifications, which called for a 12-inch (30.5 cm) clearance between the dropped bomb and the propeller arc. A return spring and latch assembly is provided to return the displacement gear to the retracted position following bomb release. (Dann)





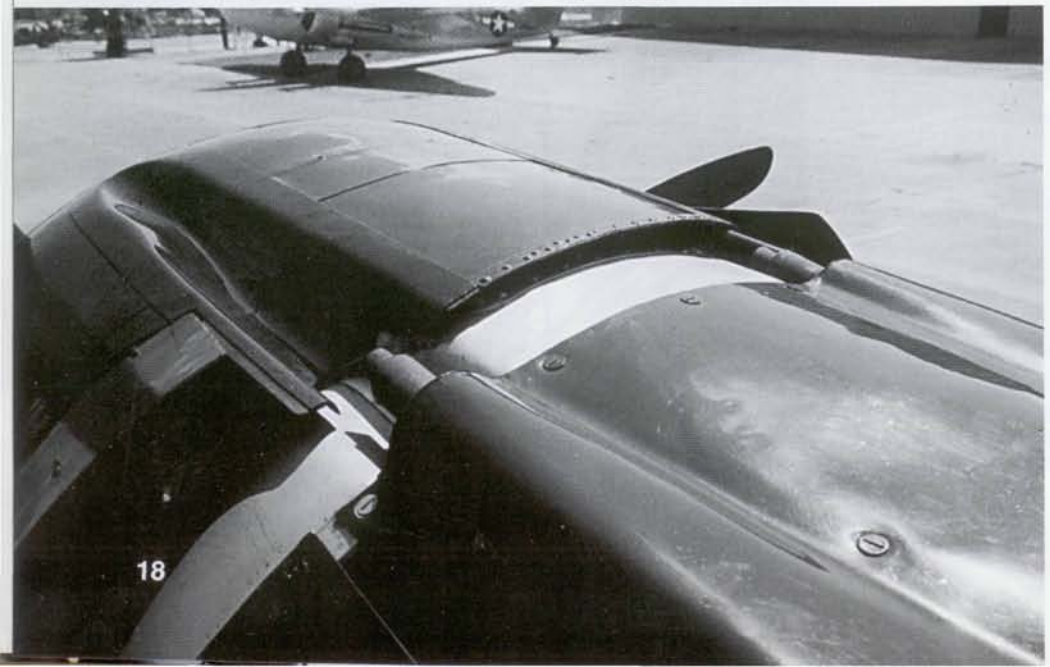
The SBD's 16.5 US Gallon (62.5 L) oil tank is located in the engine accessory section's upper area. The propeller oil accumulator is the yellow object mounted just below and to the right of the oil tank. This accumulator ensured an adequate amount of lubricating oil was supplied to the Hamilton Standard propeller's dome under all flight conditions. Various fluid lines and electrical cables snake around in the accessory section. (Dann)

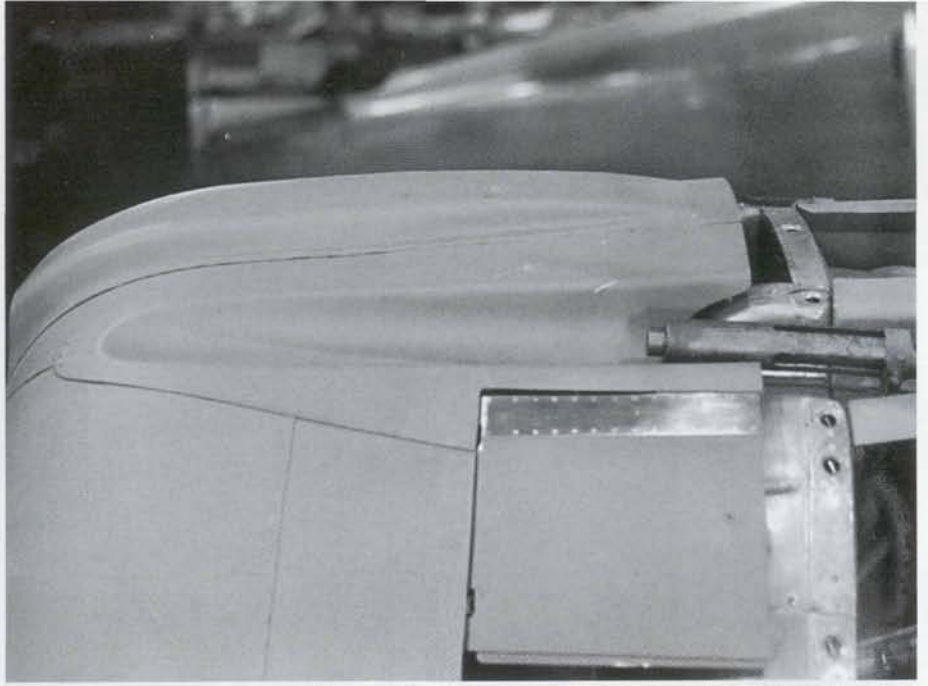


The 21-foot (6.4 M) long wire radio antenna is attached to this firewall mounted mast and to a much shorter mast atop the vertical stabilizer. The carburetor mixture control linkage is mounted near the two throttle control linkages. All three items connect through the firewall. The port .50 caliber machine gun's spent link chute was removed from this Dauntless. (Dann)

The SBD-2 featured a much smaller carburetor intake on the upper cowling than on the earlier SBD-1. Ducting to the supercharger is located just under the opened cowling, which also exposes the port .50 caliber (12.7MM) Browning M2 machine gun. This restored SBD-2 (BuNo 2106) saw action at the Battle of Midway in June of 1942. (Dann)

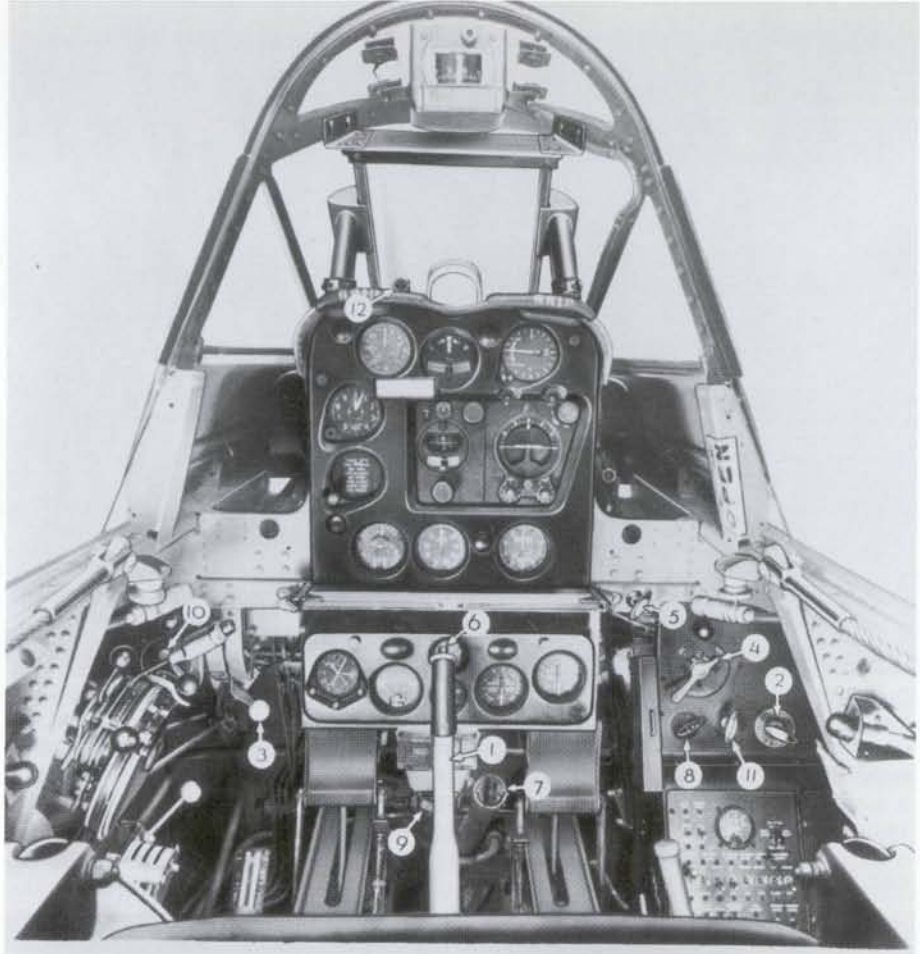
Significant design changes were made to the upper cowling of the SBD-5/6. The relocation of the carburetor induction system eliminated the need for the large scoop on the cowling. Additionally, the SBD-5/6 employed a single cowl flap per side in place of the three flaps per side in earlier Dauntlesses. (Phillips)





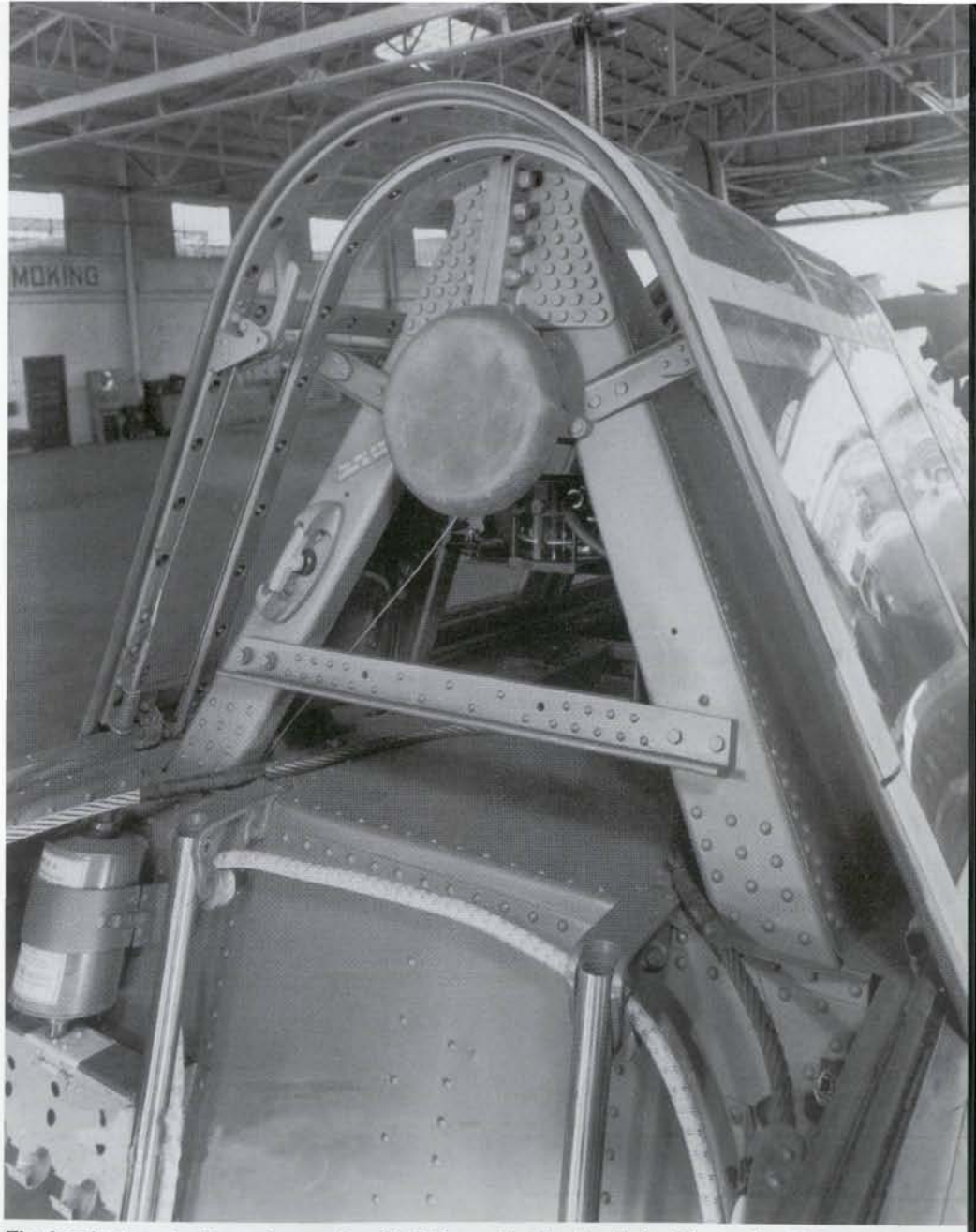
The carburetor scoop was unchanged between the SBD-2 (here) and the SBD-4. Troughs for the two .50 caliber machine guns flank this scoop. Both forward firing guns were synchronized to fire through the propeller arc. The cowling was flush riveted, while the rest of the fuselage was not. (Dann)

The SBD-5's cowl flaps were hydraulically operated via an actuator located in the central upper cowl area between the two flaps. The port cowl flap actuating rod is mounted immediately aft of the exhaust manifold, which is revealed by the open cowl flap. Streamlined fairings cover the .50 caliber machine guns mounted on the forward fuselage. (Phillips)



1. Control Stick
2. Carburetor Air Control
3. Cowling Flap Control Lever
4. Auto-Pilot "on-off" Switch
5. Parking Brake Handle
6. Trigger switch
7. Cockpit ventilator
8. Engine Primer
9. Oil Cooler Air Scoop Control
10. Ignition Switch
11. Starter Meshing Pull
12. Windshield Hot Air Control

Douglas added callouts to this photograph showing the SBD-3's instrument panel layout. Both forward firing .50 caliber machine guns have not been installed. These weapons fitted into mounts flanking the upper instrument panel. The armored windshield has an opening for the Mk III sight, which was used for both dive-bombing and gunnery. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)



The headrest and rollover frame of an SBD-2 was identical to that of the earlier SBD-1. Both these variants lacked armor protection and were not truly combat capable aircraft. The T-handle on the rollover frame initiated inflation of flotation bags on both forward fuselage sides in the case of a water landing. The seat rails are mounted to the aft bulkhead while a cord near these rails allowed for smooth vertical seat adjustment. A hoisting sling is attached to either side of the airframe. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

The magnetic compass is attached to the windshield structure immediately above the SBD-5's armored glass windshield. It is supported in place by rubber vibration absorbers. This location reduced magnetic interference and provided for more accurate compass readings. (Dann)

Outboard hinged panels provided access to the two forward firing, cowl mounted .50 caliber (12.7MM) machine guns. The butt of each weapon was in the cockpit, flanking the upper instrument panel. This allowed the pilot to manually charge the guns. The radio receiver lead-in is located just under the pilot's sliding canopy. (Dann)

An ammunition belt is fed into the breech of the port .50 caliber Browning M2 machine gun. The opened access panel revealed this panel's piano hinge. The M2 has a cyclic firing rate of 800 rounds per minute, a muzzle velocity of 2900 feet (884 M) per second, and a range of 7400 yards (6767 M). (Dann)

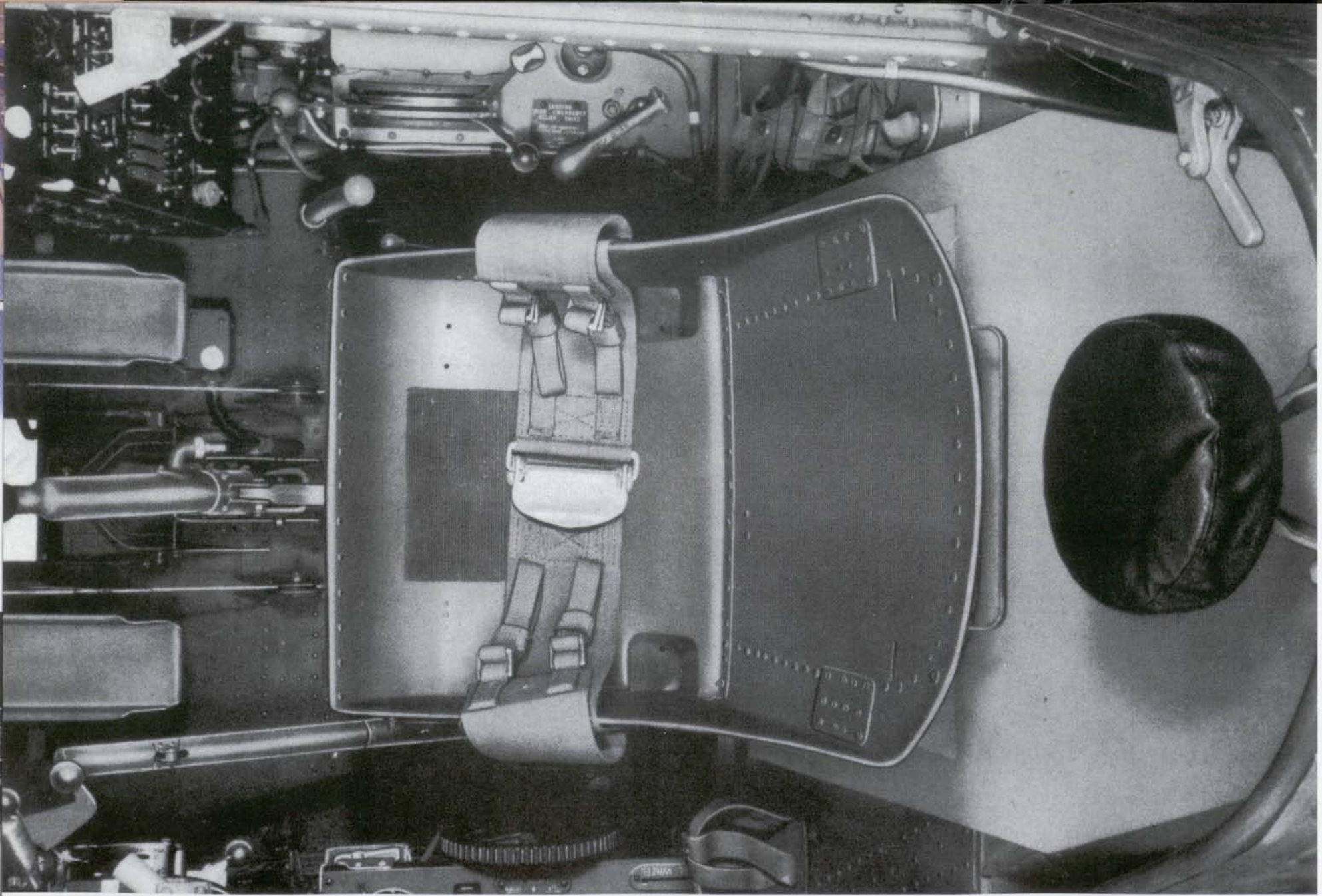
A bullet resistant glass panel is mounted behind the Dauntless' plexiglass windshield. This panel is secured to a coaming on the glareshield and to the upper windshield inner surface. The standard Mk VIII gun sight is not installed on the Lone Star Flight Museum's SBD-5. (Dann)

A retractable Mk 11A plotting chart is located between the upper and lower instrument panels of this SBD-2. The throttle quadrant is on the lower port cockpit section, with the ignition switch immediately forward of it. The cowl flap control handle is located immediately starboard of the ignition switch. Dauntless cockpits were primarily Interior Green (FS34151), with semi-gloss black (FS27038) panels. (Dann)

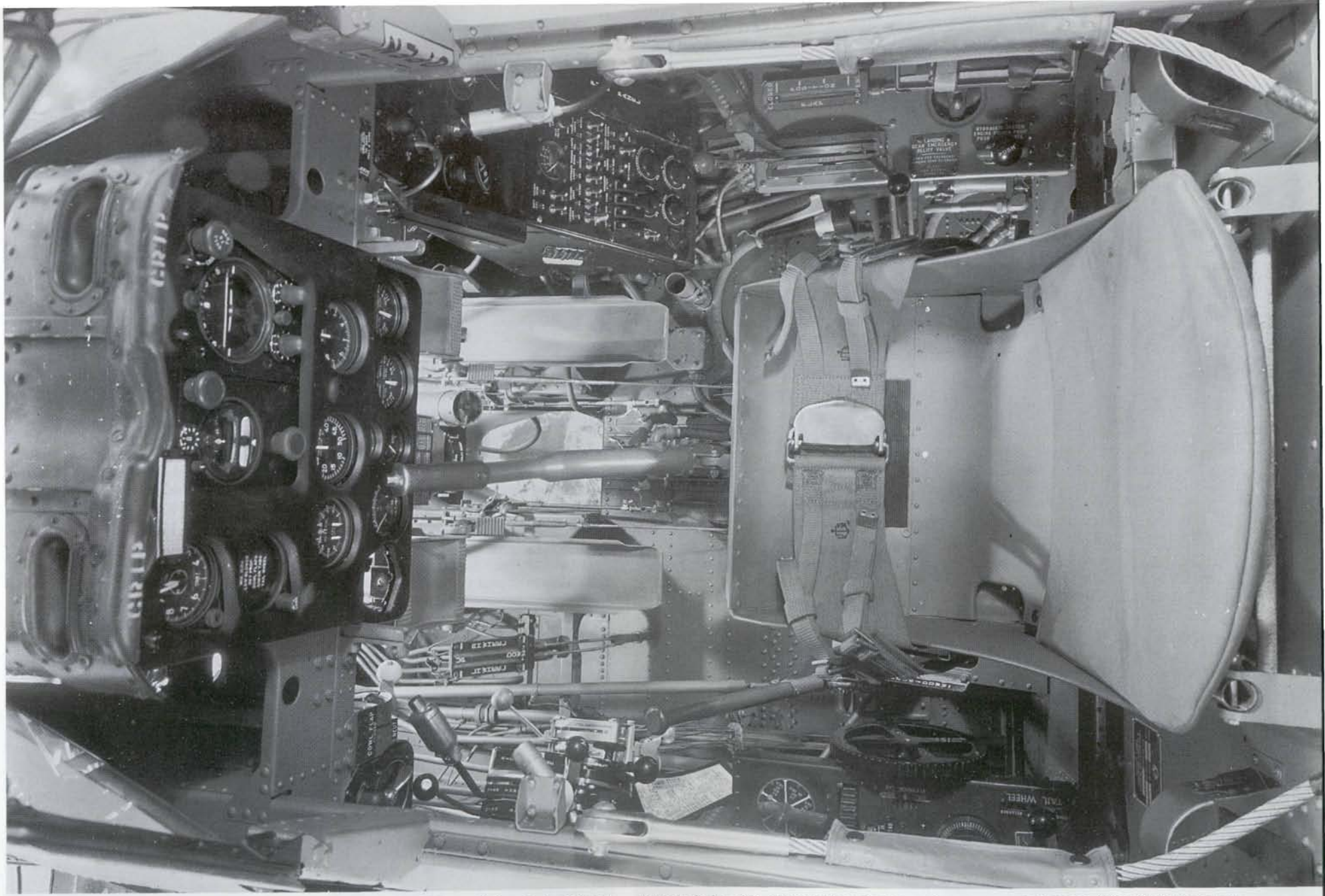
Instruments on the SBD-2's lower instrument panel are (from left): eight-day clock, cylinder head temperature gauge, suction gauge, oil pressure gauge, left fuel quantity gauge, and right fuel quantity gauge. A manufacturer's data plate is mounted below this panel, while the oil cooler scoop control is located below the data plate. The cabin air inlet is to the scoop control's right. (Dann)

The Mk III Mod 4 telescopic gun sight is mounted atop the cockpit coaming and passed through the windshield. Auxiliary ring (aft) and bead (forward) sights are mounted on the Mk III Mod 4. The magnetic compass is attached to the windshield frame immediately above the gun sight. The butt of the port .50 caliber machine gun is located to the left of the upper instrument panel. (Dann)

Canvas seat belts are draped on the pilot's seat of the SBD-2 (BuNo 2106) displayed at the National Museum of Naval Aviation. This seat was raised and lowered using a handle (not visible) on the right side of the seat. The mechanism uses elastic shock cord to vertically adjust the seat. Two red and white T-handles on the port console released parachute flares from the aircraft via aft fuselage doors. (Dann)



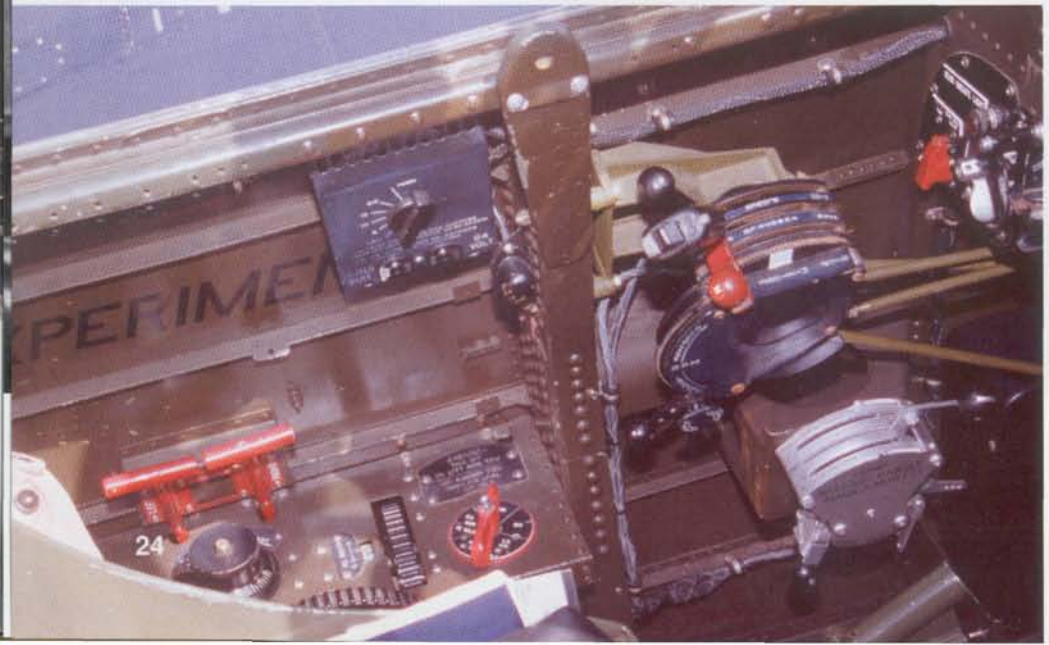
No shoulder restraints are fitted to the pilot's seat of this SBD viewed from directly overhead. A recess inside the seat accommodated the parachute, which also served as a seat cushion. Control surface trim wheels are mounted on the port console side, with the tail wheel lock aft of the wheels. The large tail hook operating handle is mounted to the left of the seat. The throttle quadrant is positioned forward of the port console. A hydraulic hand pump is fitted to the floor near the seat's right forward corner. Landing/diving flap levers are mounted forward on the starboard console, with the hydraulic pump control just aft of the flap levers. The canopy latch is mounted on the canopy frame, adjacent to the round headrest. (Douglas via Gann)



Shoulder restraints did not become standard equipment on SBDs until the start of World War Two. The seat in this Dauntless lacks the headrest in the previous photograph. Both forward firing .50 caliber guns have not been installed. A window is located on the cockpit floor immediately below the pilot's control stick. The pilot used this window to look directly below his aircraft. Two foot troughs are mounted above this window and are immediately aft of the rudder pedals. A fuel selector switch is mounted on the port console aft of the throttle quadrant. The hoisting sling wraps around the rear of the cockpit. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

The cockpit of the Lone Star Flight Museum's SBD-5 has been restored to nearly original configuration. All the flight instruments are located on the main instrument panel. The SBD-5 could also be equipped with an automatic pilot. A manifold pressure gauge is located at the extreme upper right of the panel. Gun butts of the two forward firing .50 caliber M2 machine guns flank the main instrument panel. (Phillips)

The pilot's left console contains the rudder, aileron, and elevator trim controls, the fuel selector, and two red parachute flare controls. Located on the throttle quadrant (from outboard to inboard) are the supercharger control, throttle, and mixture control. Immediately below the throttle quadrant is the bomb selector control. The large handle in the lower right corner activates the arresting hook. (Phillips)

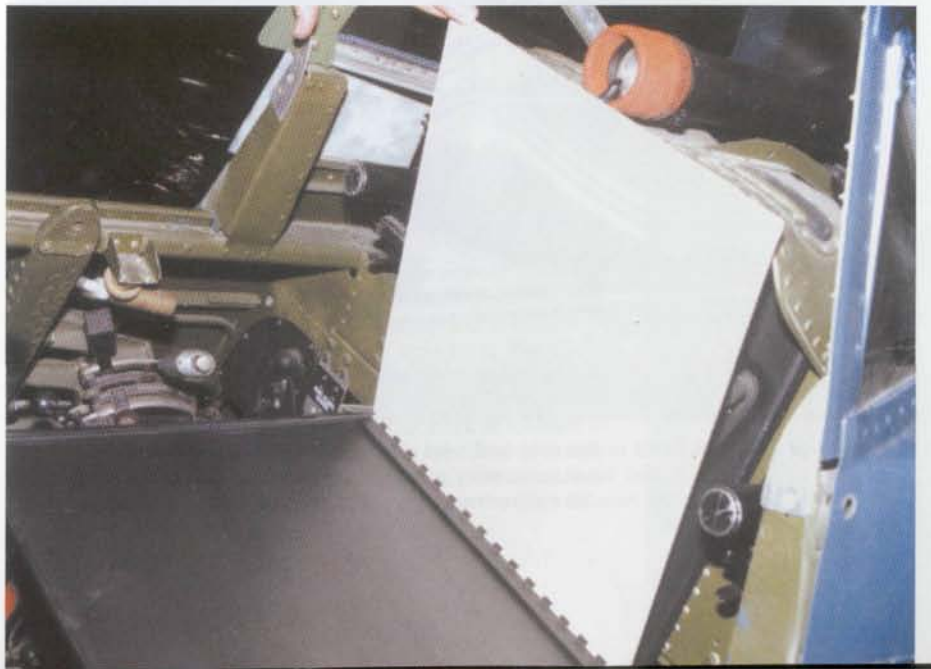


The main electrical distribution panel is located on the starboard side of the pilot's cockpit. Circuit breakers are placed on the panel's inner face, while the main portion contains electrical controls for guns and gun camera, lighting, bombs, and various electrical engine controls. The pilot's oxygen system is located to the right of his seat and is painted a light green. (Phillips)

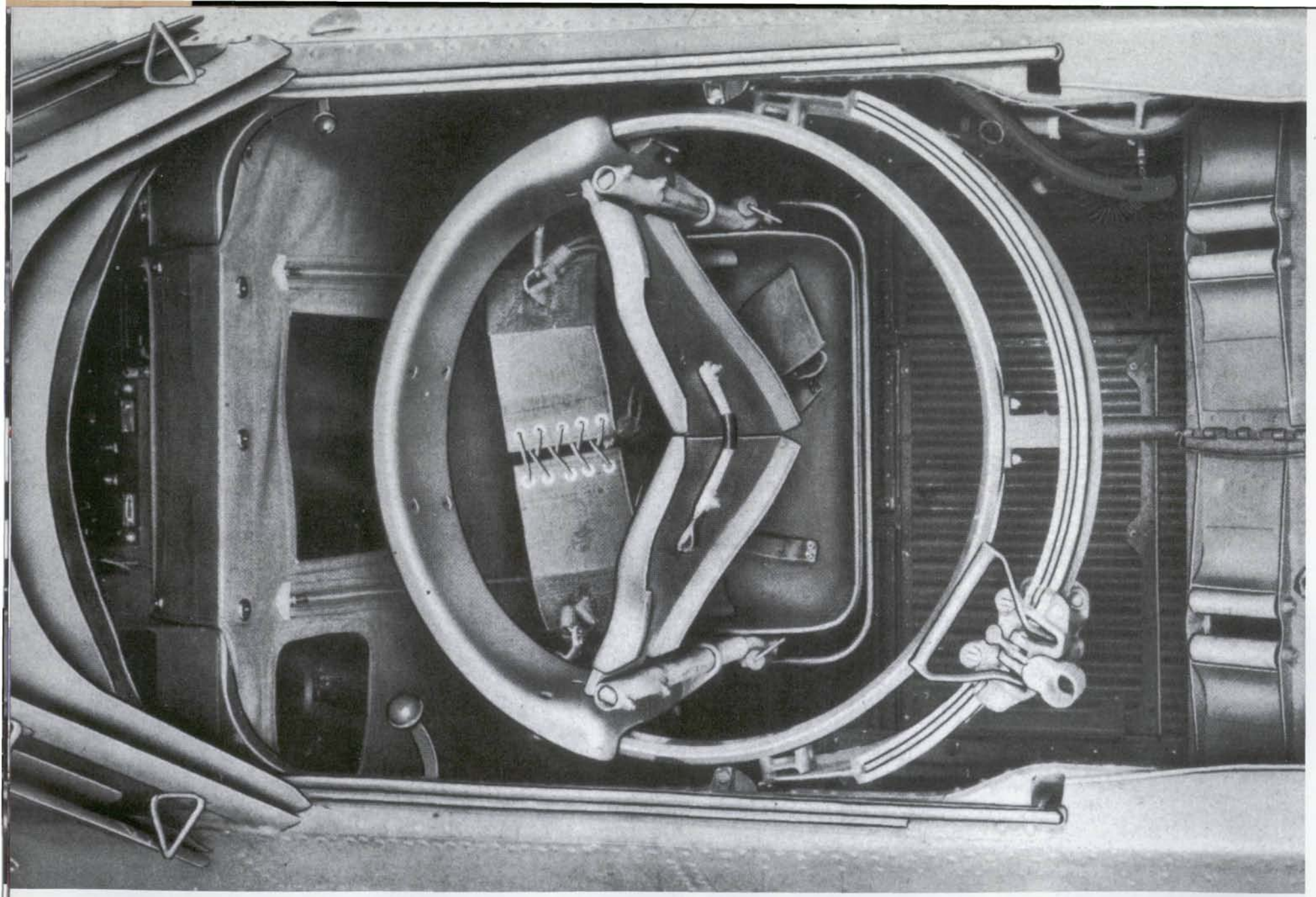
A retractable chartboard separates the primary and lower instrument panels. The lower panel instruments are (from left): fuel quantity gauge, cylinder head temperature gauge, automatic pilot pressure gauge, Outside Air Temperature (OAT) gauge, and cylinder head temperature gauge. The control lock is the red device at the base of the control stick. Just forward of the control lock is a small window the pilot used to view objects below the aircraft, such as targets. (Phillips)

One of the A-24's few internal differences from the SBD was the throttle quadrant in the pilot's cockpit. The throttle lever had a wider handle with two buttons on the upper surface, instead of the single button on the SBD's narrower handle. (Kevin Smith/Dauntless Aviation)

The navigation chartboard is extended from its position immediately below the main instrument panel. A release latch on the left guide secured it in the stowed position. This chartboard is opened to expose the index file normally located inside the board. (Owen Miller)

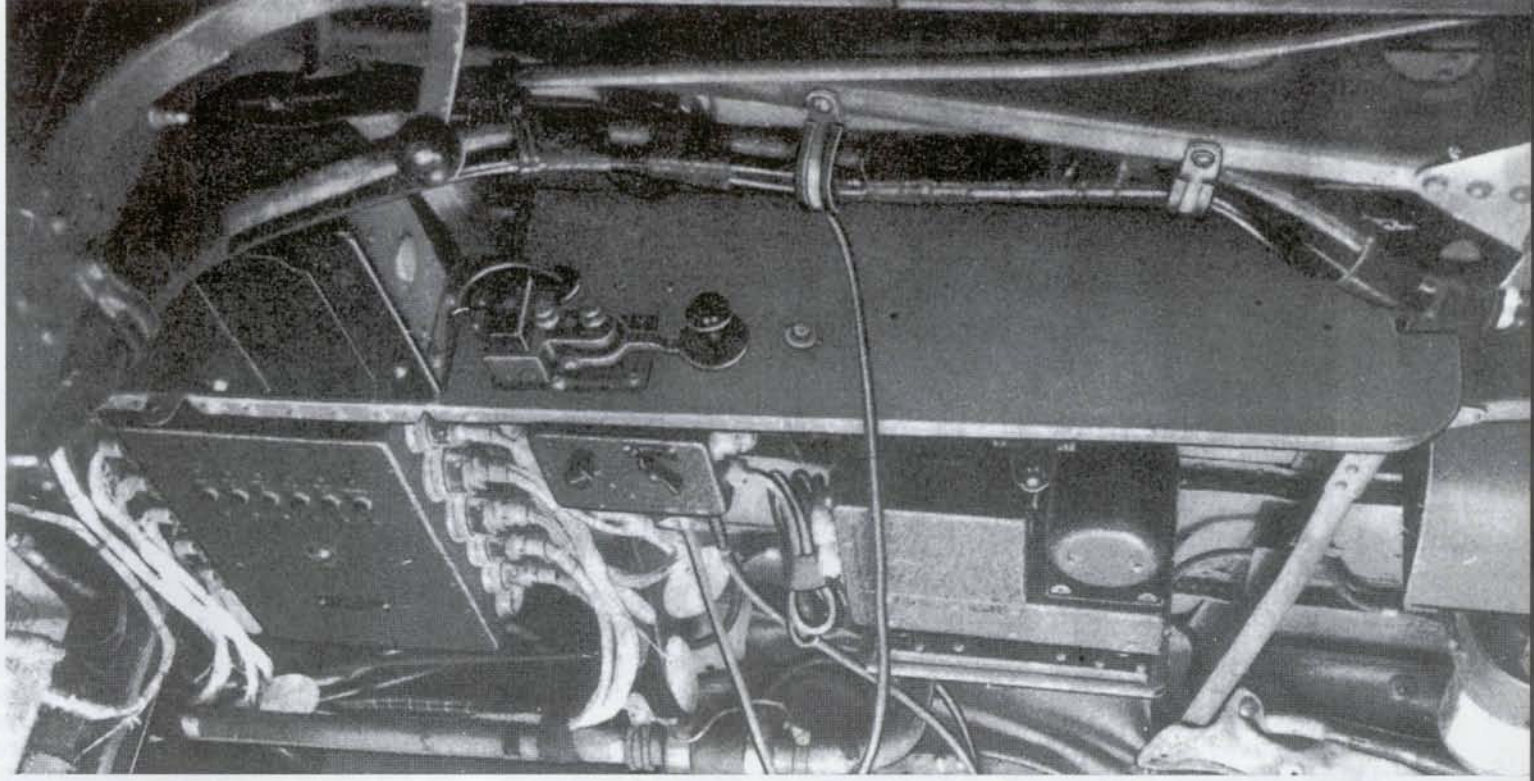


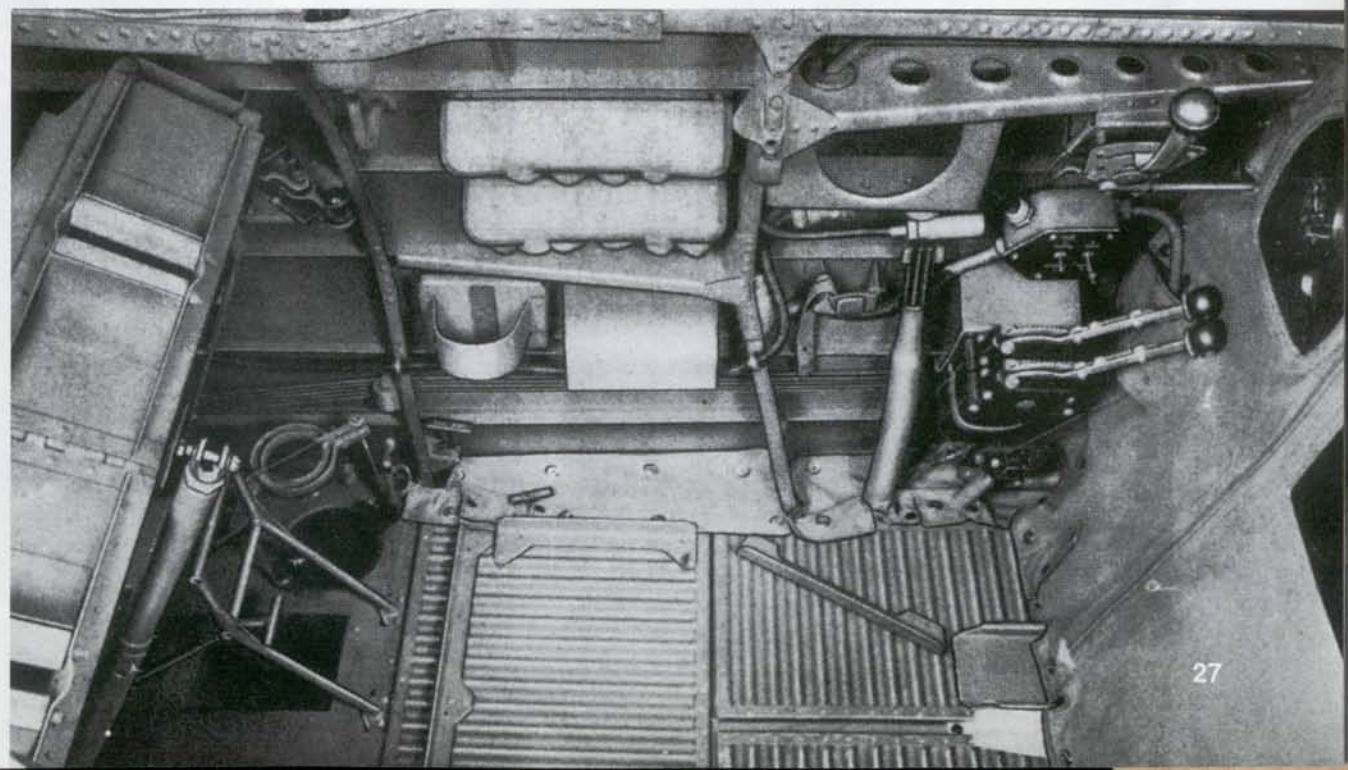
This wartime photo shows the underside of the twin .30 caliber (7.62MM) Browning M2 machine gun installation in the SBD's rear cockpit. This installation replaced the earlier single .30 caliber weapon during SBD-3 production. A 500-round ammunition belt fed each gun, with three spare belts provided for each weapon. A mounting mechanism secured the gun assembly to the gun truck. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)



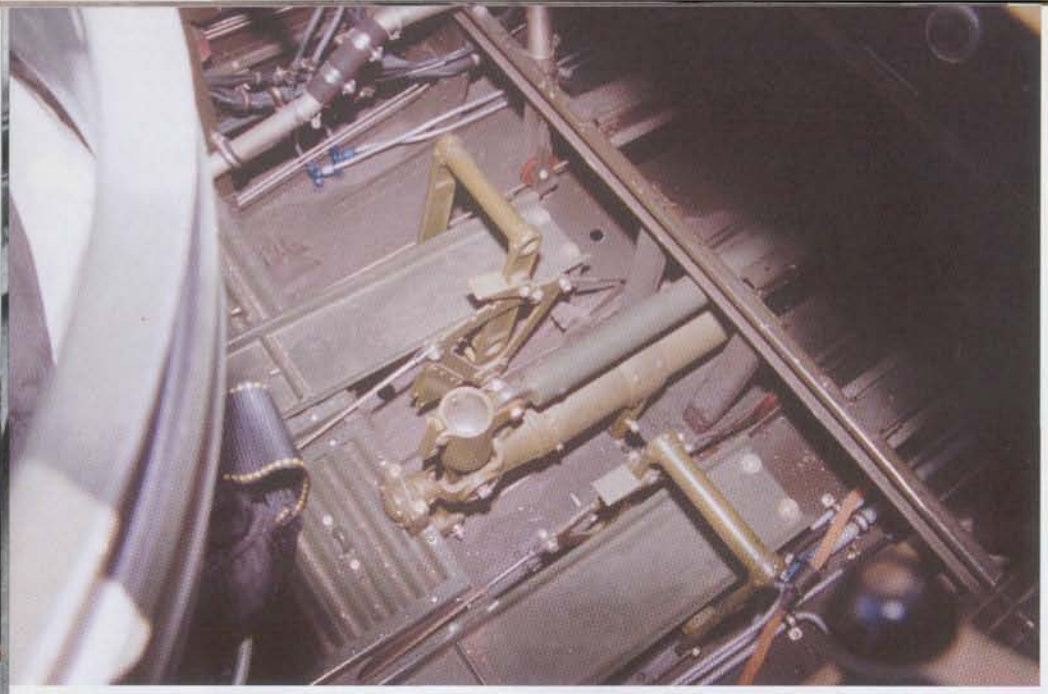
A protective curtain equipped with clear plastic windows is located at the front of the SBD's rear cockpit. This curtain allowed the radio operator/gunner to see his instrument cluster and also the radio equipment. The gunner's throttle is located on the port cockpit wall, while the canopy control lever is mounted to starboard across from the throttle. Canvas seat belts are fitted to the seat and seat side armor is placed in the stowed position. The flexible track and truck assembly are installed in the ring around the seat. Ammunition boxes for the two .30 caliber machine guns are mounted aft of the gunner's seat. (Douglas via Gann)

The Morse Code transmitter key is located atop the starboard aft cockpit console. Most contact reports to home carriers or shore bases were made using Morse Code. This was because voice transmissions were shorter in range and more prone to atmospheric interference. The canopy control lever is mounted above the radio transmitter unit. The radio operator/gunner used this lever to open or close the multi-section aft canopy. An electrical junction box for connecting various electrical systems is mounted below the console's forward edge. Early SBDs had their cockpits left in glossy Aluminum (FS17178); however, wartime aircraft had these surfaces painted Interior Green (FS34151) as an anti-corrosion measure. (Douglas via Gann)





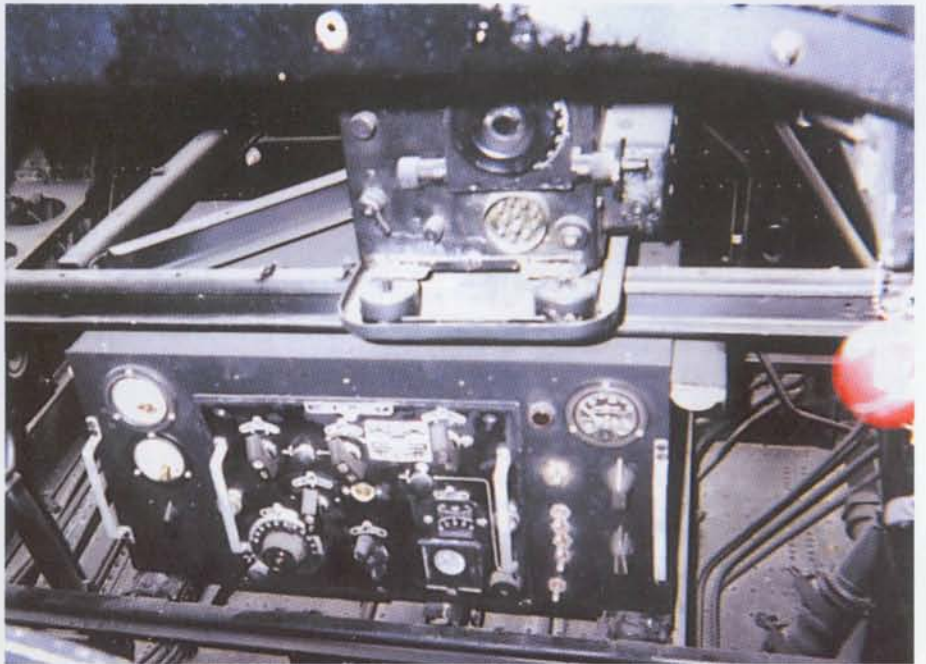
Ammunition storage boxes for the rear machine guns are located at the rear of the aft cockpit. The flare pistol rounds are carried in two cylindrical containers on the port cockpit sidewall, just above the kick-in step structure. The radio operator/gunner shot flares to signal fellow aircraft, ships, or land bases when the radio was out or under radio silence conditions. The gunner's control stick is located in its stowed position along the port wall. It is placed inside an opening in the cockpit floor when used. The throttle is mounted high on the wall, immediately aft of the gunner's instrument panel. (Douglas via Gann)



The SBD could be flown from both the front and rear cockpits. This operation was used for training and in case the pilot was incapacitated in flight. The rear gunner's control stick was removed when not in use and stowed on the rear cockpit's port side. Simple rudder bars are located above foot troughs and these flank the rear control stick mount in the cockpit floor. (Phillips)

The gunner uses these two foot rests immediately ahead of the rear cockpit bulkhead when he is facing aft. A T-handle control visible under the starboard foot rest releases the gun tunnel door on the upper fuselage. The circular opening just to the right of the foot rest was used to store a carbon dioxide (CO_2) fire extinguisher. (Dann)

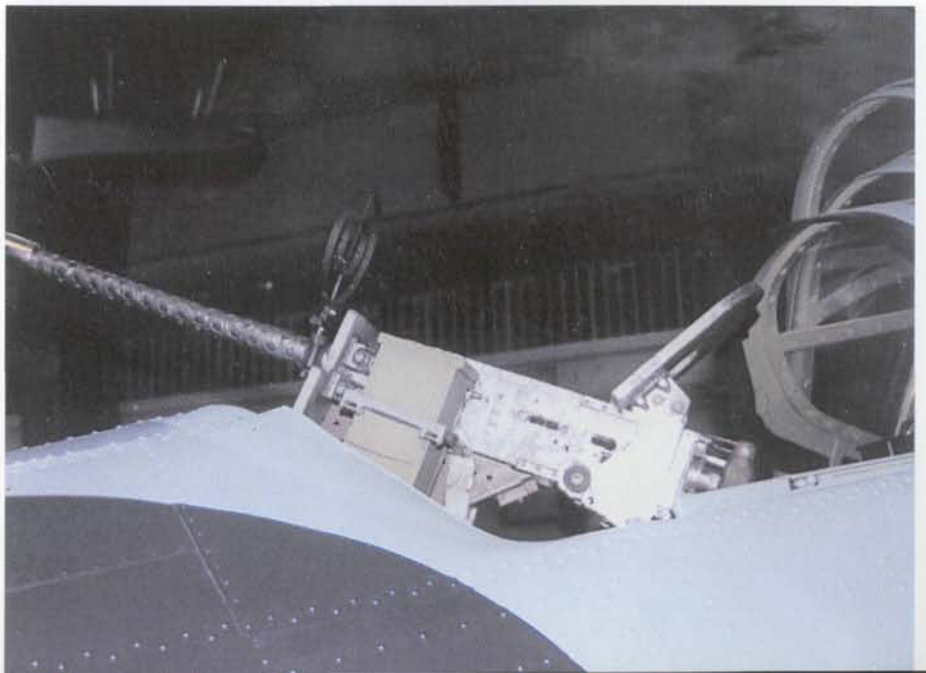
The Naval Aircraft Factory (NAF) GP-3 radio transmitter/tuning unit is located on the avionics shelf. This shelf was placed at the front of the rear cockpit. Avionics boxes are typically mounted on vibration isolation mounts, which kept airframe vibrations from the sensitive equipment. (Dann)

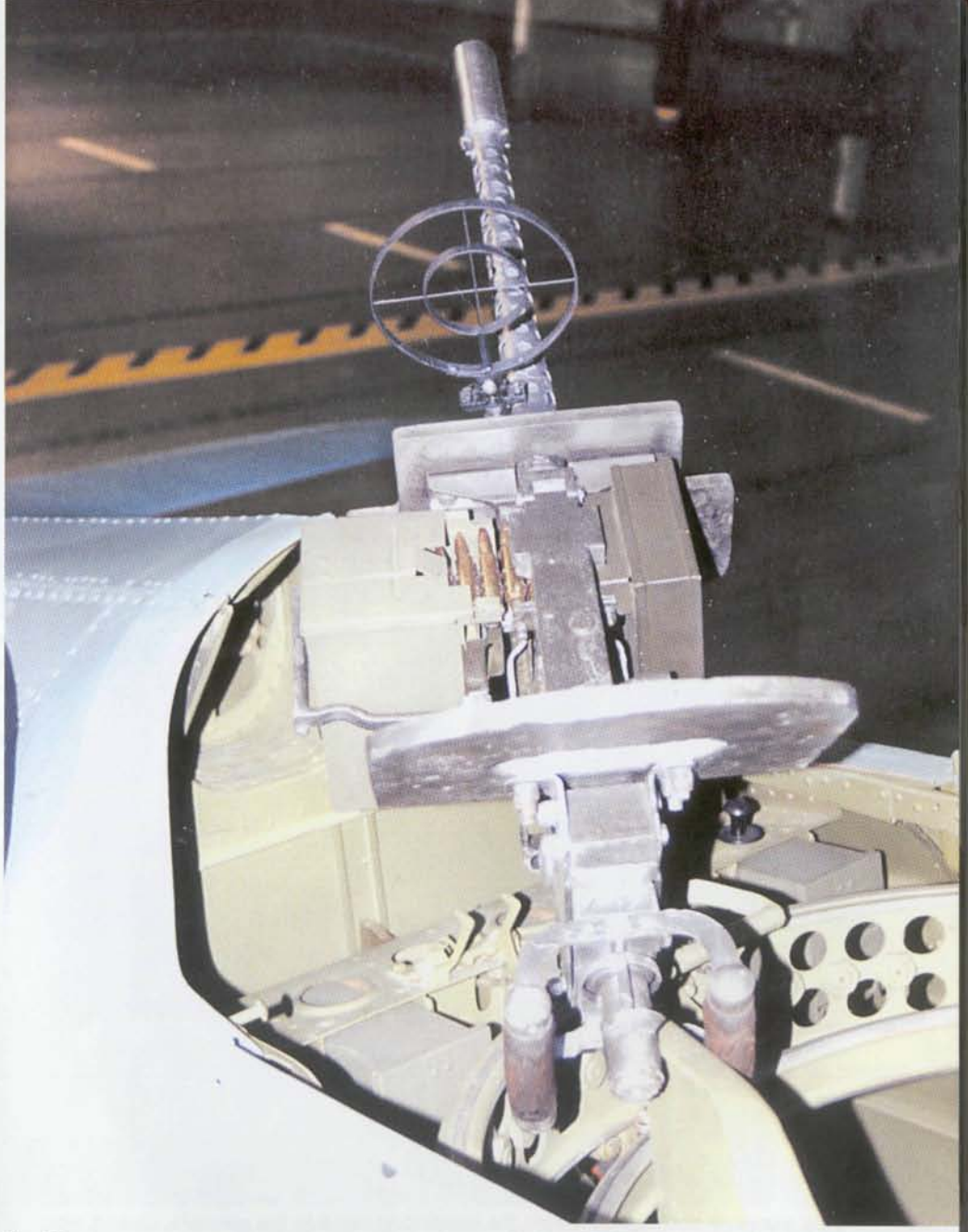


The NAF RU-5 radio receiver is mounted above the GP-3 transmitter. It is also mounted on vibration isolation pads. The cockpit of this SBD-4 (BuNo 06900) is painted NS Black (FS37038), the color it was painted when it was salvaged from Lake Michigan in 1993. This Dauntless crashed during a training mission. (Dann)

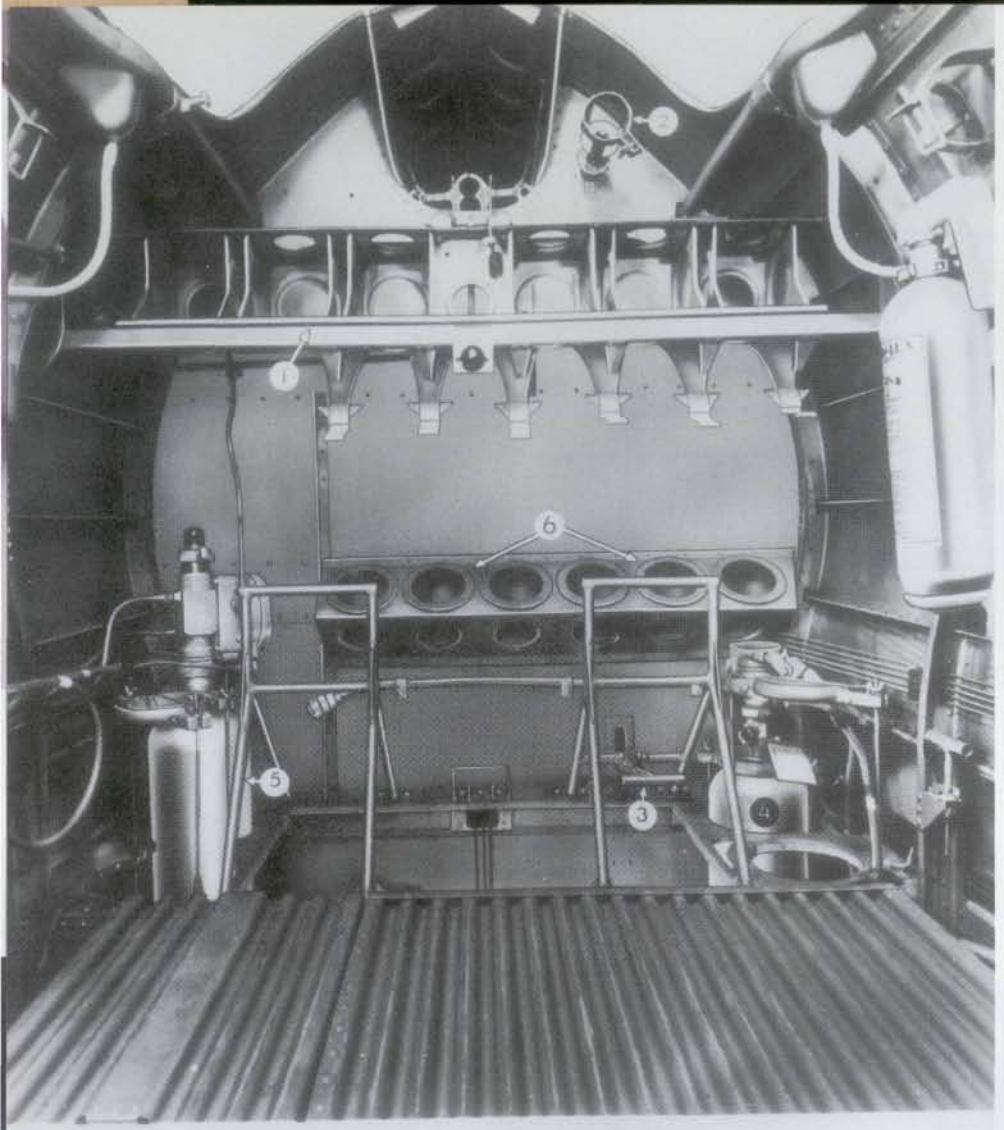
This SBD-2 (BuNo 2106) is equipped with the early single .30 caliber (7.62MM) Browning M2 machine gun in the rear cockpit. This gun is capable of firing through an arc of 240°, but the gun truck is limited to 42° either side of directly aft and its maximum depression angle is 63°. The Mk VI ring sight is mounted on the barrel. (Dann)

The Mk VI ring sight folded down to allow clearance in the gun tunnel when the M2 was stowed. Armor plating is mounted above the weapon's breech. An olive colored Mk 1 magazine is clipped to the breech of the M2 machine gun. Each magazine was capable of holding 100 rounds of .30 caliber (7.62MM) ammunition. (Dann)

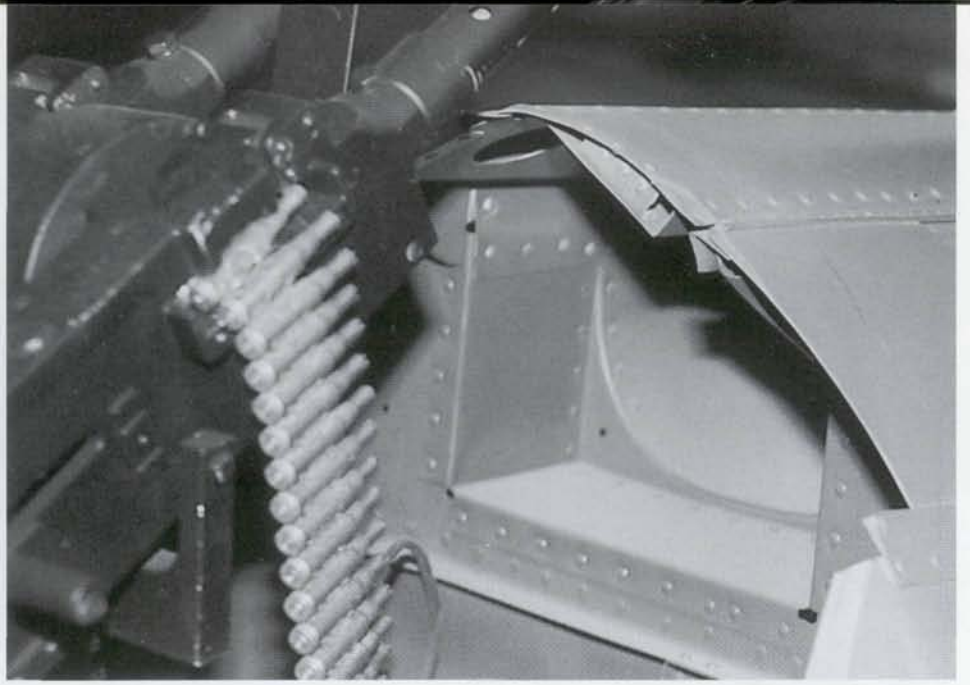




The M2 machine gun is mounted to the seat ring truck via a Mk III adapter. The gun tunnel is located on the aft cockpit bulkhead and is accessed from above by hinged gun tunnel doors. Several Mk I magazines are installed on a magazine rack on the aft cockpit bulkhead. This rack held up to six magazines, for 600 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition. The SBD-1, -2, and early -3s employed the single .30 caliber rear machine gun. (Dann)

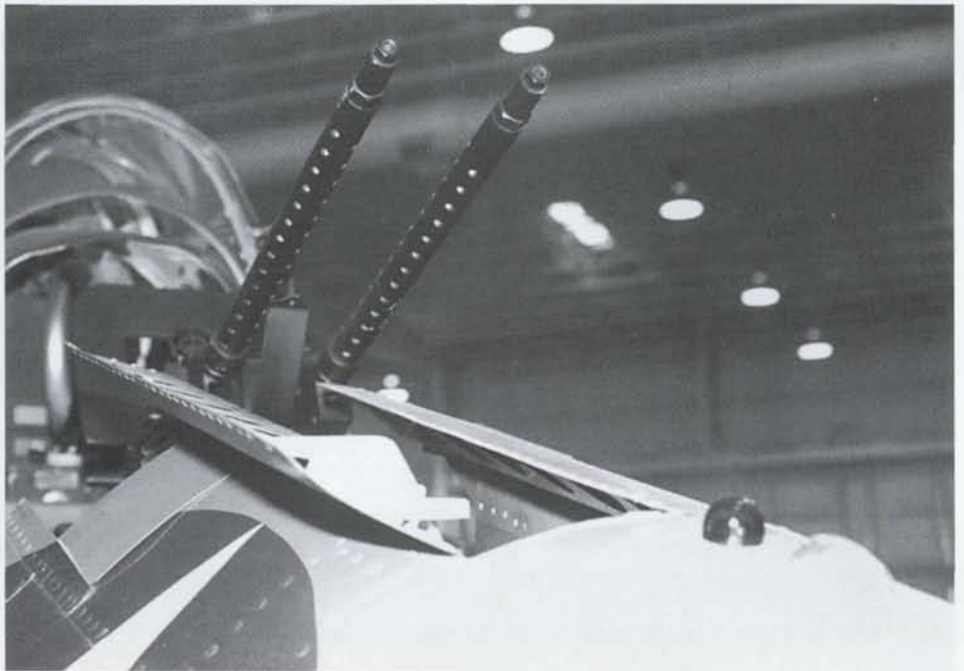

1. Ammunition Rack
2. Smoke Grenade Handle
3. Gun Tunnel Door Release
4. CO_2 Fire Extinguisher Bottler
5. Flotation System Bottle
6. Float Light Racks

This company photograph shows the location of items in the gunner's cockpit rear area. Both the seat and the gun truck were removed. A smoke grenade handle is mounted beside the gun tunnel. No .30 caliber machine gun magazines are fitted in the ammunition rack. A rack for six float lights is mounted above the rear cockpit floor, which is covered with corrugated aluminum sheet. The interior color appears to be Interior Green (FS34151). (Douglas Aircraft via Kevin Smith)



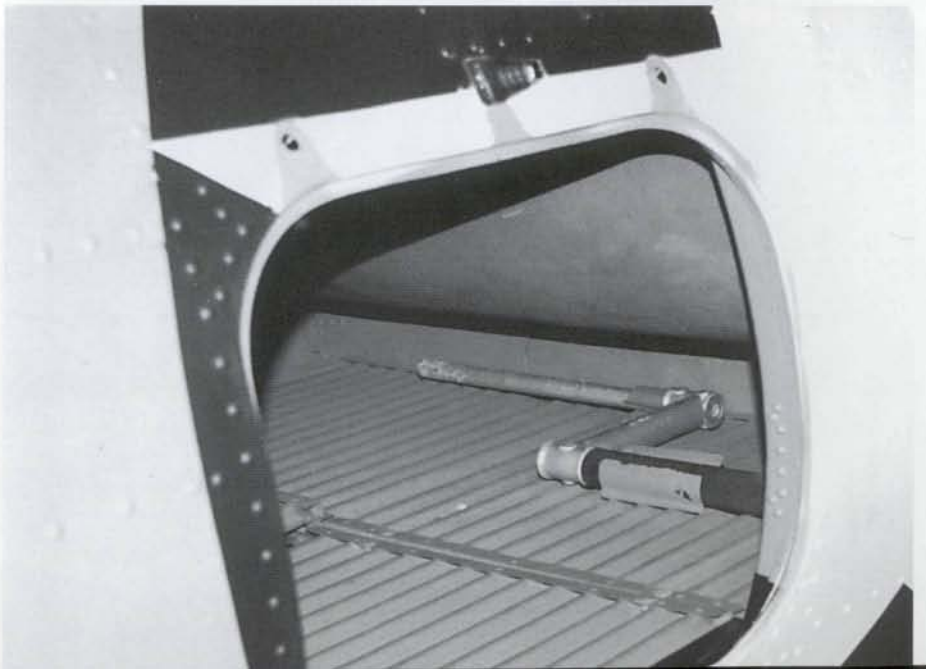
A twin .30 caliber machine gun mount is extended on this SBD-3 on display at Battleship Memorial Park in Mobile, Alabama. The gun tunnel entrance is recessed into the aft cockpit rear bulkhead. One of the sliding panels installed on aircraft equipped with twin gun mounts is located to starboard. (Owen Miller)

The port hinged gun tunnel door is open on this SBD-3; however, the starboard door remains closed. Lightening holes are located in the tunnel doors' inner surfaces. A green formation light and a white identification light are mounted immediately aft of the gun tunnel doors. (Owen Miller)

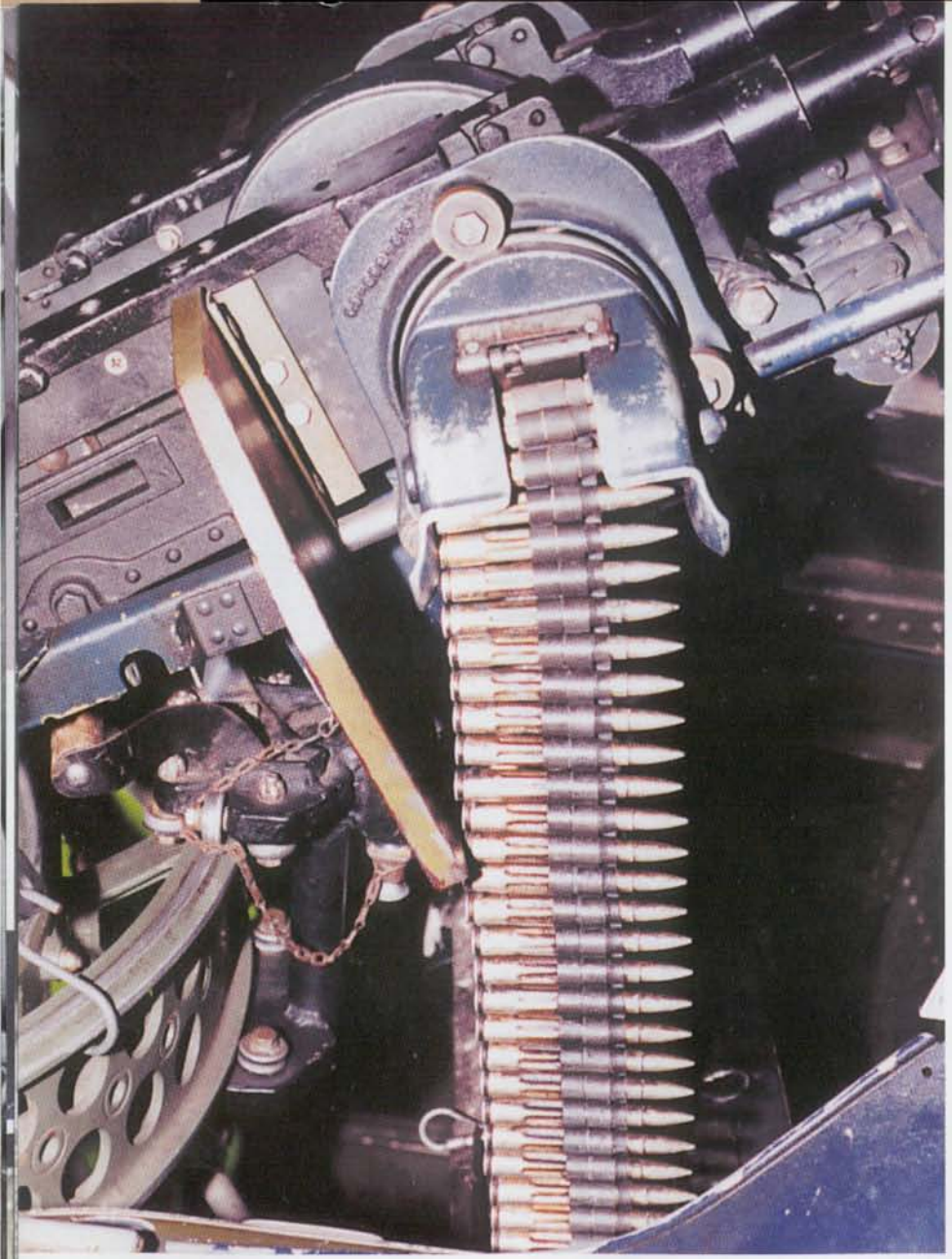


A bottom hinged baggage door is located on the SBD's starboard side. The door is held closed by two Dzus-type hand-operable fasteners and a briefcase type three-digit Sesame combination lock. The combination was typically set to the last three digits of the manufacturer's serial number. (Dann)

The inertial starter crank is placed in its stowed position in the baggage compartment. This crank is unclipped, inserted into a keyed receptacle aft of the right exhaust stack, and stowed again after starting. The life raft enclosure is immediately above the crank, while a tool kit is located underneath the baggage compartment floor. (Dann)



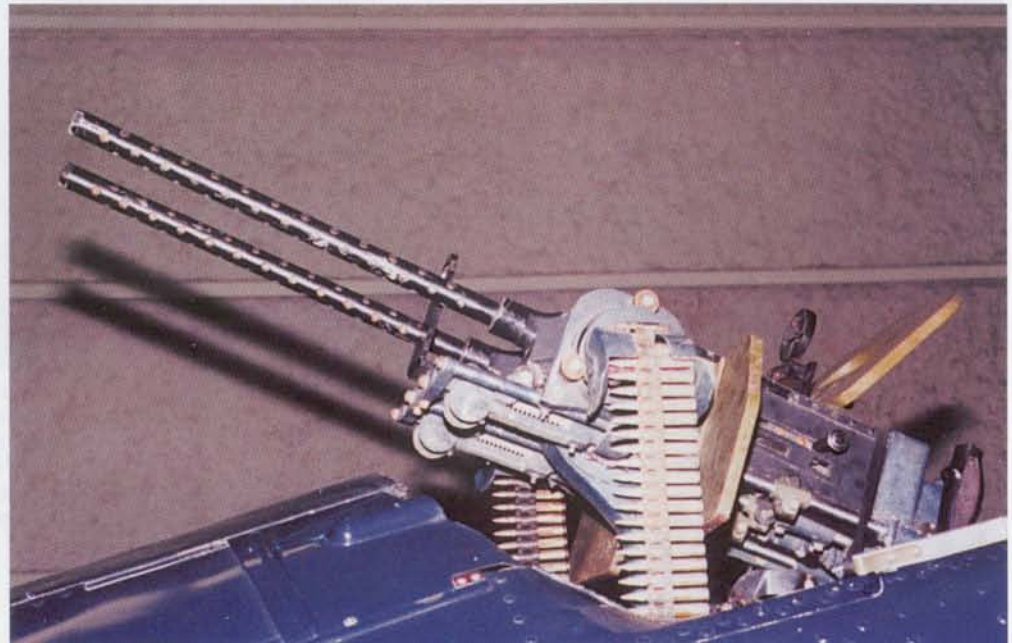
A dual parachute flare container assembly is fitted behind a snap-on curtain in the aft fuselage baggage compartment. The container is loaded through a small hinged panel atop the fuselage and the flares are ejected through doors located on the lower port fuselage. The pilot released the Mk 4 parachute flares using two T-handle controls on his left console near the rudder trim tab control. Compartment and door inner surfaces are painted Interior Green. (Dann)

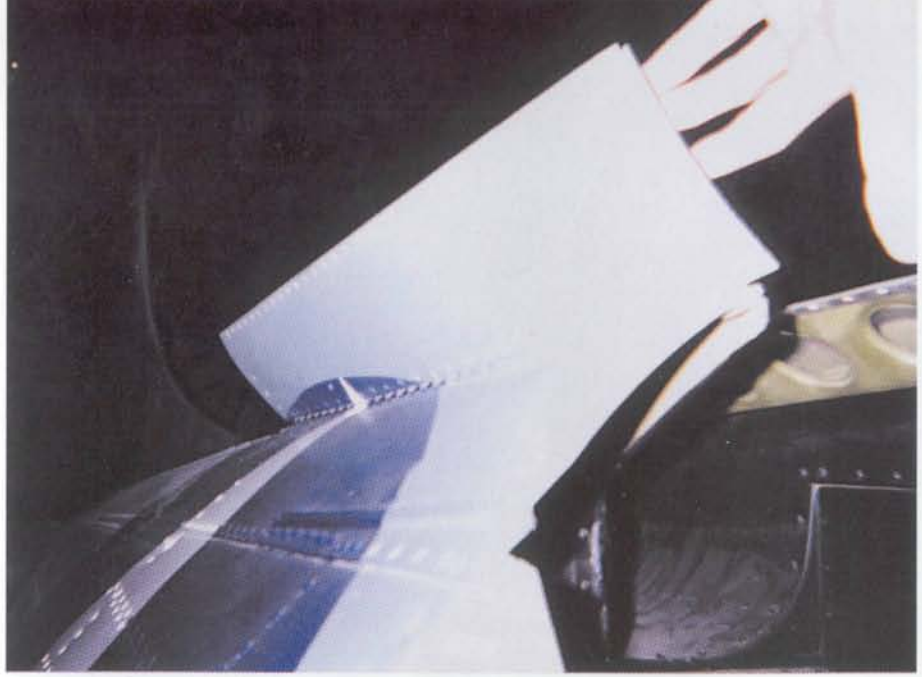


Early combat experience showed that a single aft facing gun was inadequate. This resulted in a twin .30 caliber (7.62MM) machine gun mount becoming standard on SBD-3s and later Dauntlesses. The shoulder armor plate is fitted immediately aft of the ammunition belt. The belt used metal links to hold the rounds together before loading into the weapon. The links and spent cartridges were ejected from the gun after firing. A black adapter post mounts the gun assembly to the gun truck. (Dann)

Both gun tunnel doors are closed on this Dauntless while the machine guns are extended. The guns are stowed in a tunnel aft of the rear cockpit when not in use. A rear cockpit foot pedal controls the spring-loaded doors and the stowage latch used to hold the guns in place. Additional sliding doors are mounted outboard of the gun tunnel doors. (Dann)

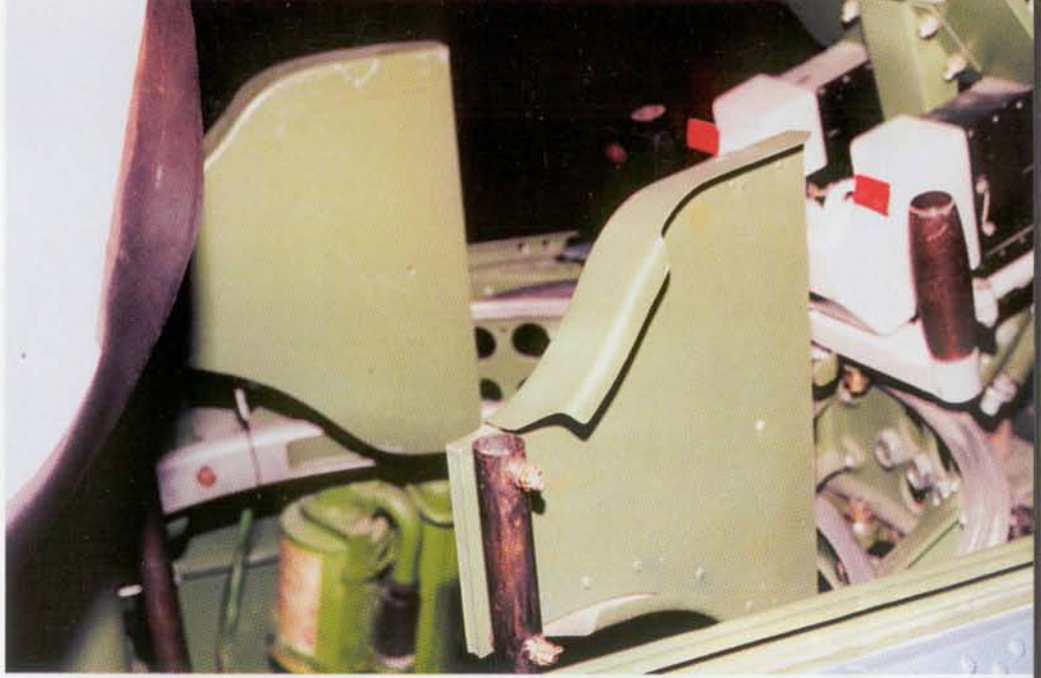
Both .30 caliber machine guns are mounted to a Mk 11-3 adapter, which is fitted to an adapter post. Ammunition is fed from boxes located on the aft bulkhead. Swiveling feed units send the ammunition into the gun breeches. Spent shells and links are fed to a chute between the guns, which allows them to fall to the floor of the gunner's compartment. (Dann)





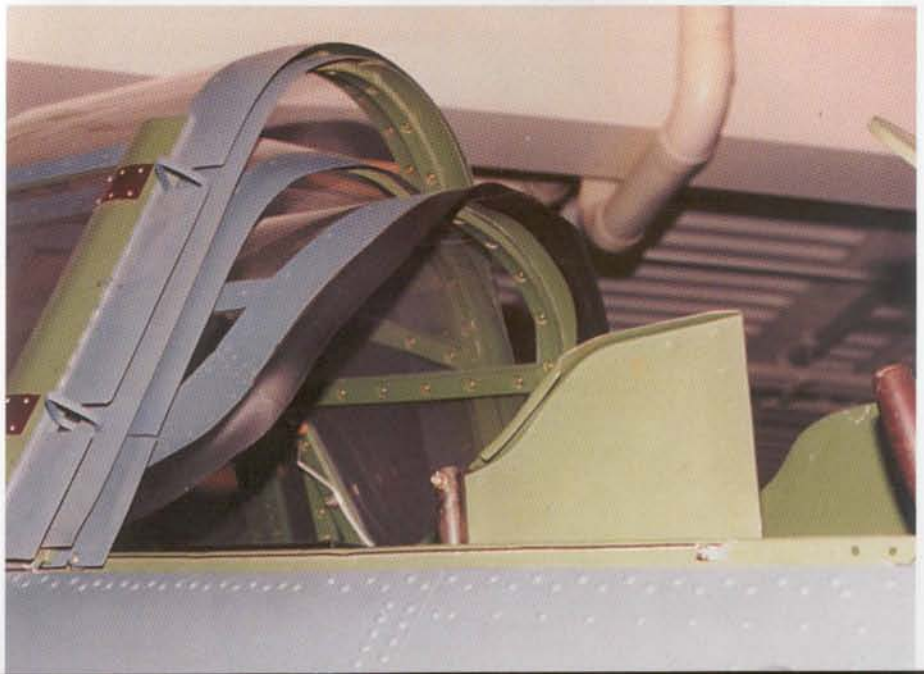
Piano wire hinges hold the gun tunnel doors in place. A secondary door immediately below the hinged door slides fore and aft. This secondary door – mounted to port and starboard – is common on SBDs equipped with the dual .30 caliber mounts. (Dann)

The gunner's rear canopy is in the stowed position. A large rubber weather strip fitted around the rear canopy frame's base sealed out moisture when the canopy was closed. The aft canopy section was hinge-mounted and was tilted to this position prior to sliding it forward. Airflow deflectors mounted on the edge of the pilot's sliding canopy reduced turbulence that adversely affected aiming and firing of the rear guns. (Dann)

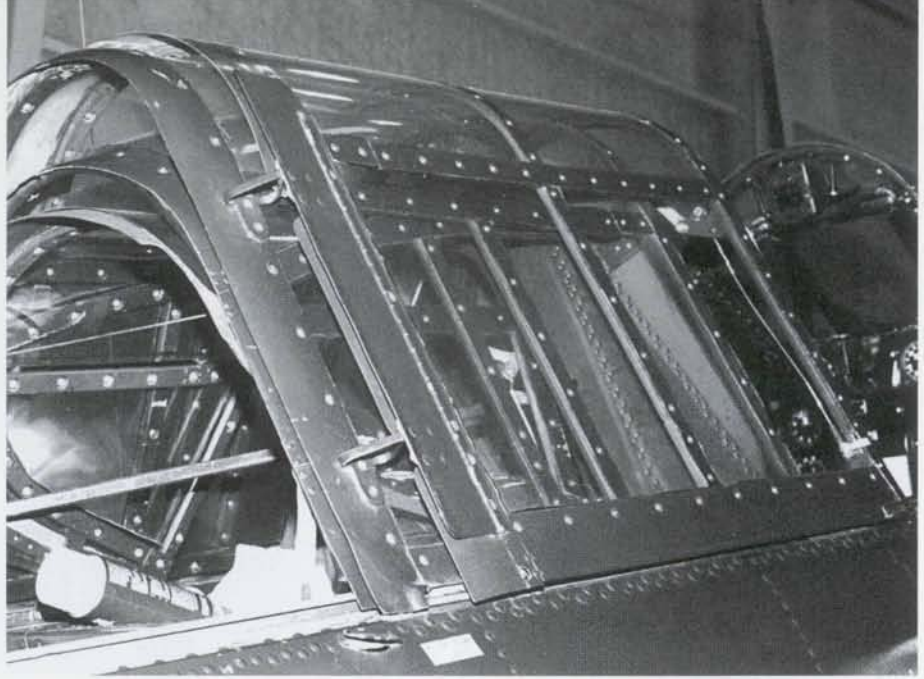


Two moveable plates mounted to port and starboard provided armor protection to the rear gunner. They were fastened to the gun truck sides and moved with it when the gunner slewed his guns. These plates were stowed when not in use to improve rear cockpit access. (Dann)

The SBD's cockpit enclosures are fully opened. The rear gunner's aft-most canopy is hinged and tilts to allow clearance for the gunner as he slides it forward. A DU-1 Direction Finder (DF) antenna – painted half silver and half black – is mounted just forward of the gunner's cockpit. (Dann)

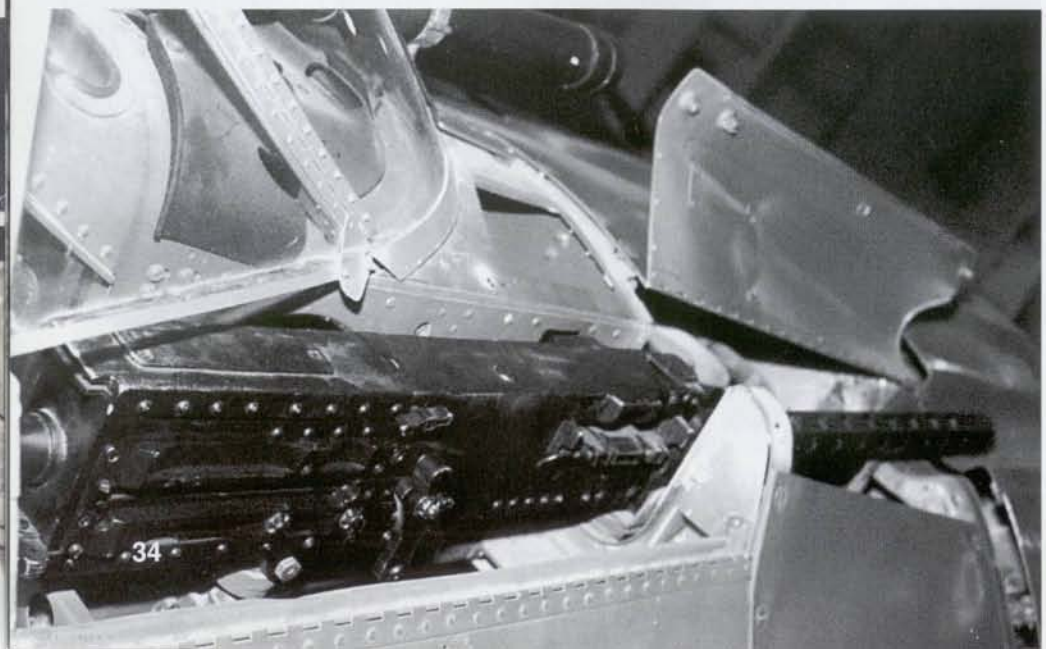


The pilot's canopy was fully opened for cockpit access and egress. It was normally left open during launch and recovery to allow the pilot to easily escape in case of an accident. A circular headrest is mounted onto armor plating. Crew armor protection was not standard on the Dauntless until the SBD-3 variant. (Dann)



Airflow deflectors are mounted to the aft end of the pilot's canopy. These deflectors lay flush against the canopy when the canopy is closed. They extend when the canopy is opened to deflect airflow from the gunner's cockpit. The rollover structure is mounted aft of the pilot's seat. (Dann)

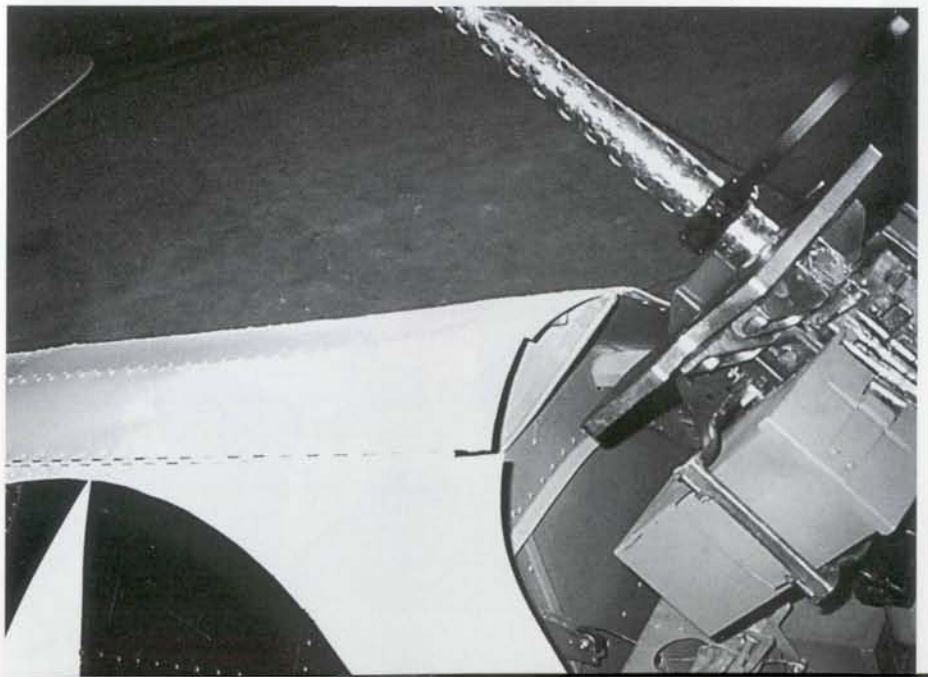
Two access panels allow for maintenance and removal of each forward firing .50 caliber (12.7mm) machine gun. Gun synchronization through the propeller arc employed an electrical impulse generator, located on the engine's rear accessory housing. This generator delivered timed electrical impulses to the fire control solenoid attached to the impulse generator and delivered to the gun's trigger motor. (Owen Miller)



A DU-1 loop DF antenna mounted between the two cockpits homed in on continuous wave radio signals from ground stations. The coil set container is placed to the right of the DU-1. The rear enclosure release mechanism is fitted near the container. One of the buttons used to affix a canvas cover (not installed on this SBD) to the bulkhead is mounted on the bulkhead's upper edge. (Owen Miller)

The rear gun tunnel is exposed on an SBD-1 under restoration by the National Museum of Naval Aviation (NMNA). The flexible mounted aft machine gun was stowed here when it was not in use. The tunnel was closed by spring-operated doors, which the gunner operated using a foot pedal near his right foot. This pedal also released the gun latches, which held the gun in place when stowed. (Dann)

Both gun tunnel doors are closed on NMNA's SBD-2. These doors were secured in place via piano wire-type hinges on the outboard edges. The gun doors' design changed during SBD-3 production to accommodate a twin gun mount. (Owen Miller)

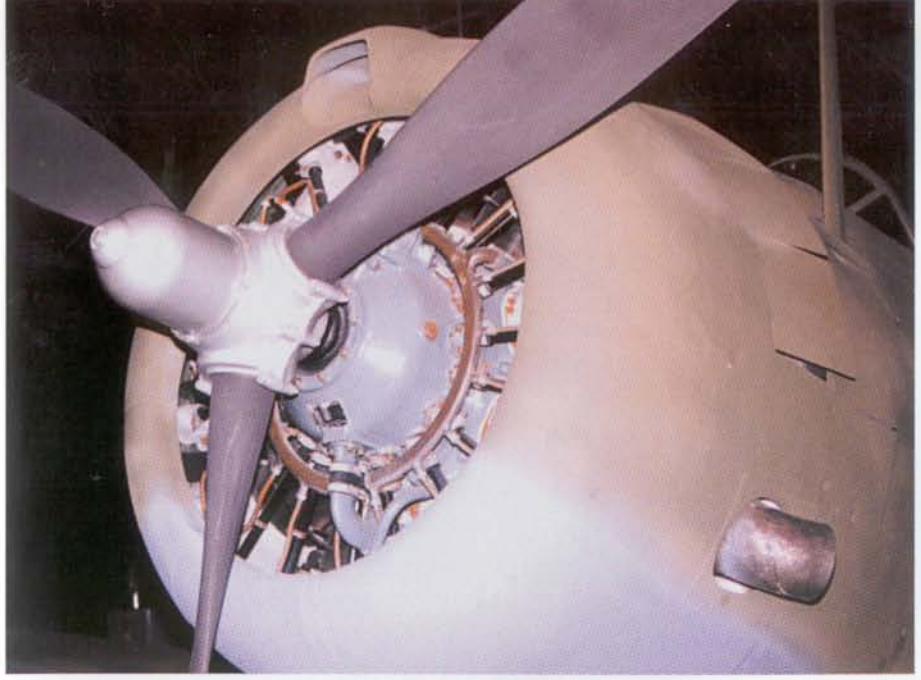


The central hinged doors and additional sliding doors flanking the center hatches covered the SBD-5's gun tunnel. These sliding doors opened aft to accommodate the larger twin gun mount. One green light is mounted immediately aft of the central doors, with a white light further aft. A modern whip radio antenna is mounted beside the blue-green light on this restored Dauntless. This antenna was used for a radio mandated by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations. (Phillips)

The raft compartment door is opened on the port fuselage side of this SBD. The cylindrical compartment aft of the rear cockpit had space for life rafts and emergency rations. Four lightening holes are stamped into the compartment door's inner surface, which is painted Interior Green. This door is hinged at the bottom. A grounding strap is fitted between the fuselage and the door. (Dann)

The raft compartment door closed flush with the aft fuselage. The compartment carried through to the starboard fuselage side and rivets are placed around the opening. The aerodynamic wooden knob was turned to gain entrance to this compartment. Black stenciling is painted over part of the national insignia, which covered much of this door. (Dann)

The life raft compartment is identified on the Lone Star Flight Museum's SBD-5. A green section light and a clear identification light – are mounted on the upper fuselage. The two lower fuselage flare chutes are located below the national insignia. (Dann)

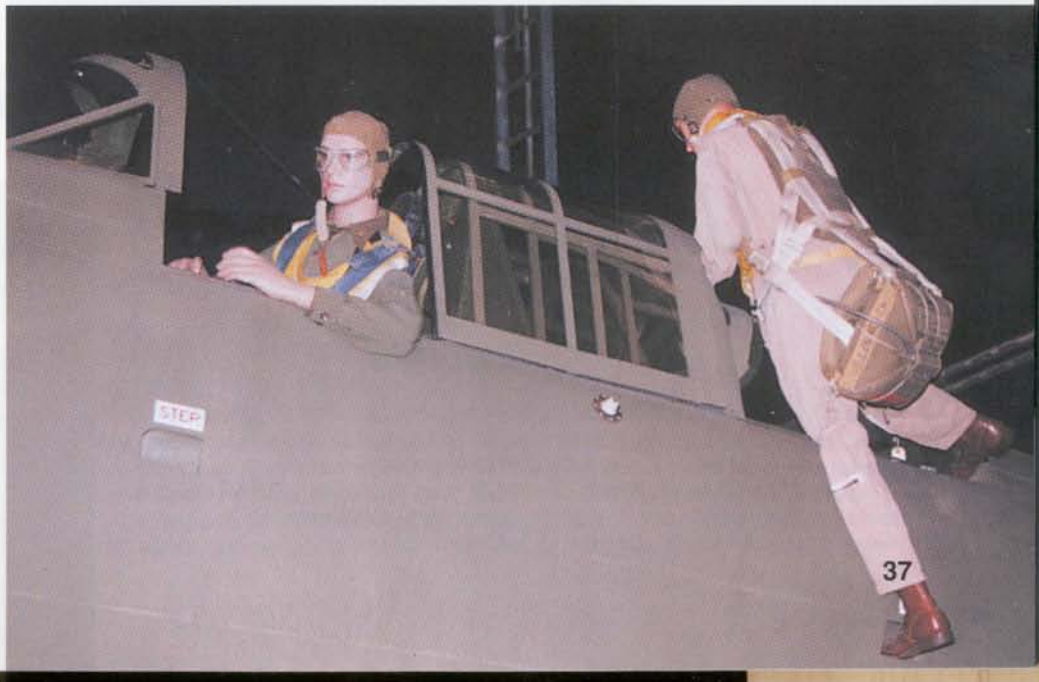


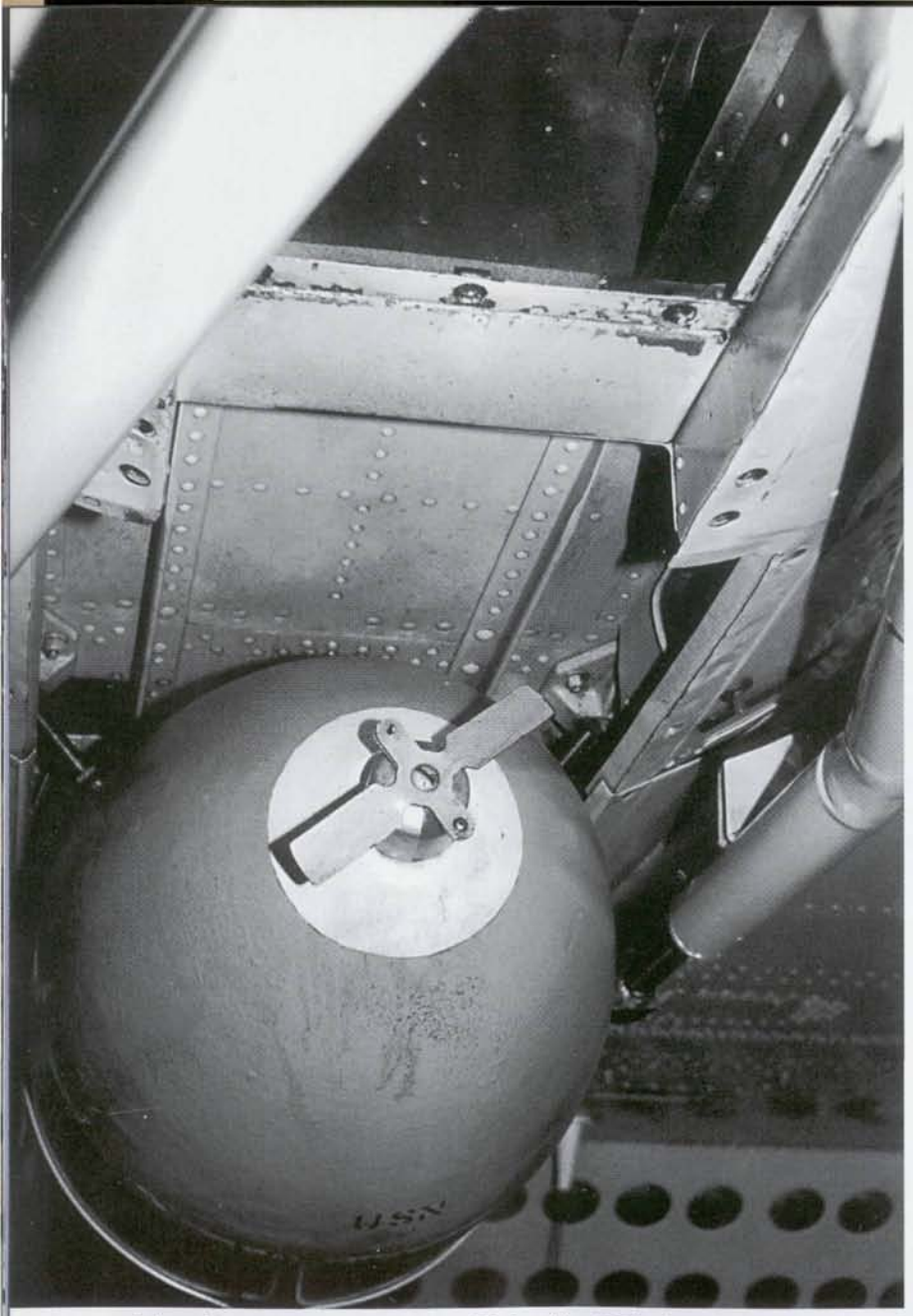
The United States Air Force Museum (USAFM) in Dayton, Ohio has one of the rare Dauntless/Banshee series aircraft painted to represent an A-24. The USAFM identifies this as an A-24 (SBD-3), but the Hamilton Standard Hydromatic propeller was fitted to the A-24A (SBD-4). (Barthelmes)

A-24s came down the same Douglas production line as the SBD. Small changes were made to meet the Army's requirements, including removing the tail hook and replacing the solid tail wheel with a pneumatic one. Army A-24s were painted Dark Olive Drab 41 (FS34087) over Neutral Gray 43 (FS36173). (Barthelmes)

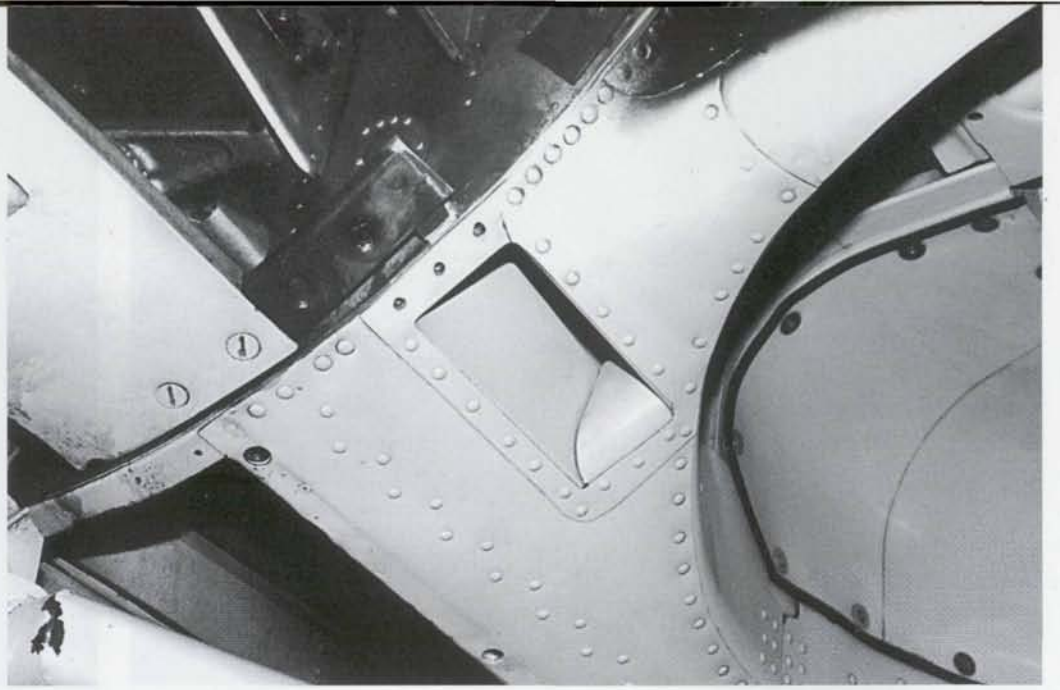
Cowling fasteners are located on the cowling undersurface. The oil cooler intake is fully open immediately aft of the cowling. The US Army Air Corps (USAAC) operated 953 Banshees: 168 A-24s (SBD-3), 170 A-24As (SBD-4), and 615 A-24Bs (SBD-5). (Barthelmes)

Two mannikins are posed with the USAFM's A-24. USAAC A-24s saw limited action in various parts of the Pacific campaign, such as the Philippines and the Aleutians. A majority of the Banshees remained stateside and acted as training or utility aircraft. One A-24A Banshee (42-6783) remained in the USAF inventory as late as June of 1950. (Barthelmes)



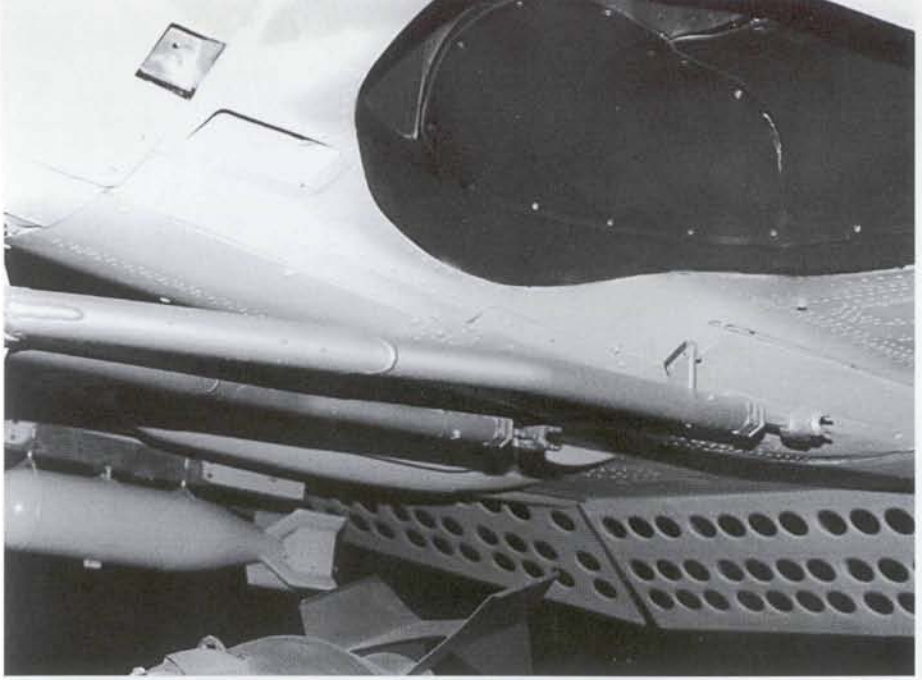


A 'bombing window' 15.5 inches (39.4 CM) by 8.5 inches (21.6 CM) is located on the SBD's undersurface, just forward of the centerline bomb. It facilitates the pilot viewing the target when the aircraft is directly overhead. A cover can be installed over this window when not in use. The nose fuse on the 500 pound (227 KG) bomb has a arming vane, which spins after the weapon's release to arm the bomb. (Dann)



Ammunition shell ejection chutes are located immediately forward of the wing root and wheel well on both port and starboard sides. The pilot's 'bombing window' recess is located inboard of the port ejection chute. This window is mounted on the cockpit floor between the foot troughs. (Dann)

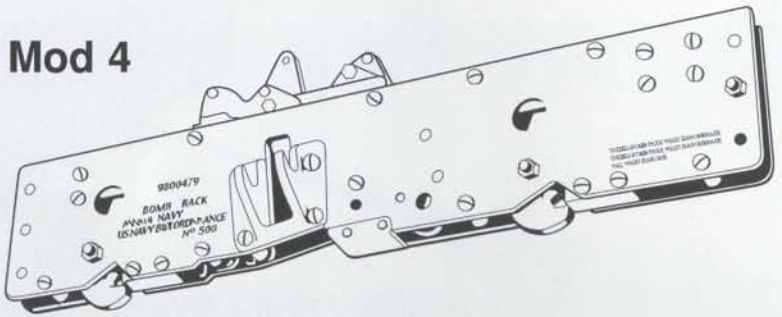
A 500 pound General Purpose (GP) bomb is mounted on the SBD-3's centerline rack. Auxiliary doors closed with Dzus fasteners flank the weapon, due to its small size. These doors would be opened when larger bombs are carried. A banding strap around the bomb's center secures the weapon to the rack and is released with the bomb. The displacing gear ends adjust to fit the bomb. (Dann)



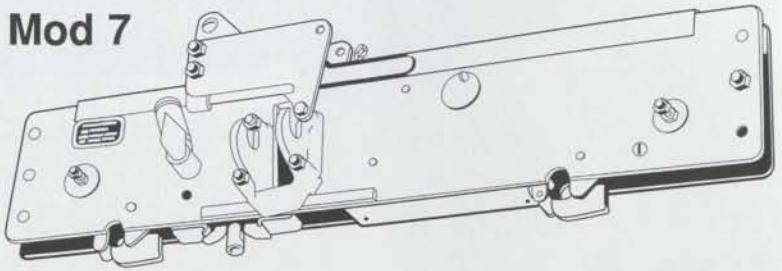
An aerodynamic fairing was fitted when no bomb was installed on the centerline rack. Additionally, a cover is fitted over the small 'bombing window.' These fairings were held in place with Dzus fasteners. Two small fittings held the bomb displacement gear in place when no centerline ordnance was carried. (Dann)

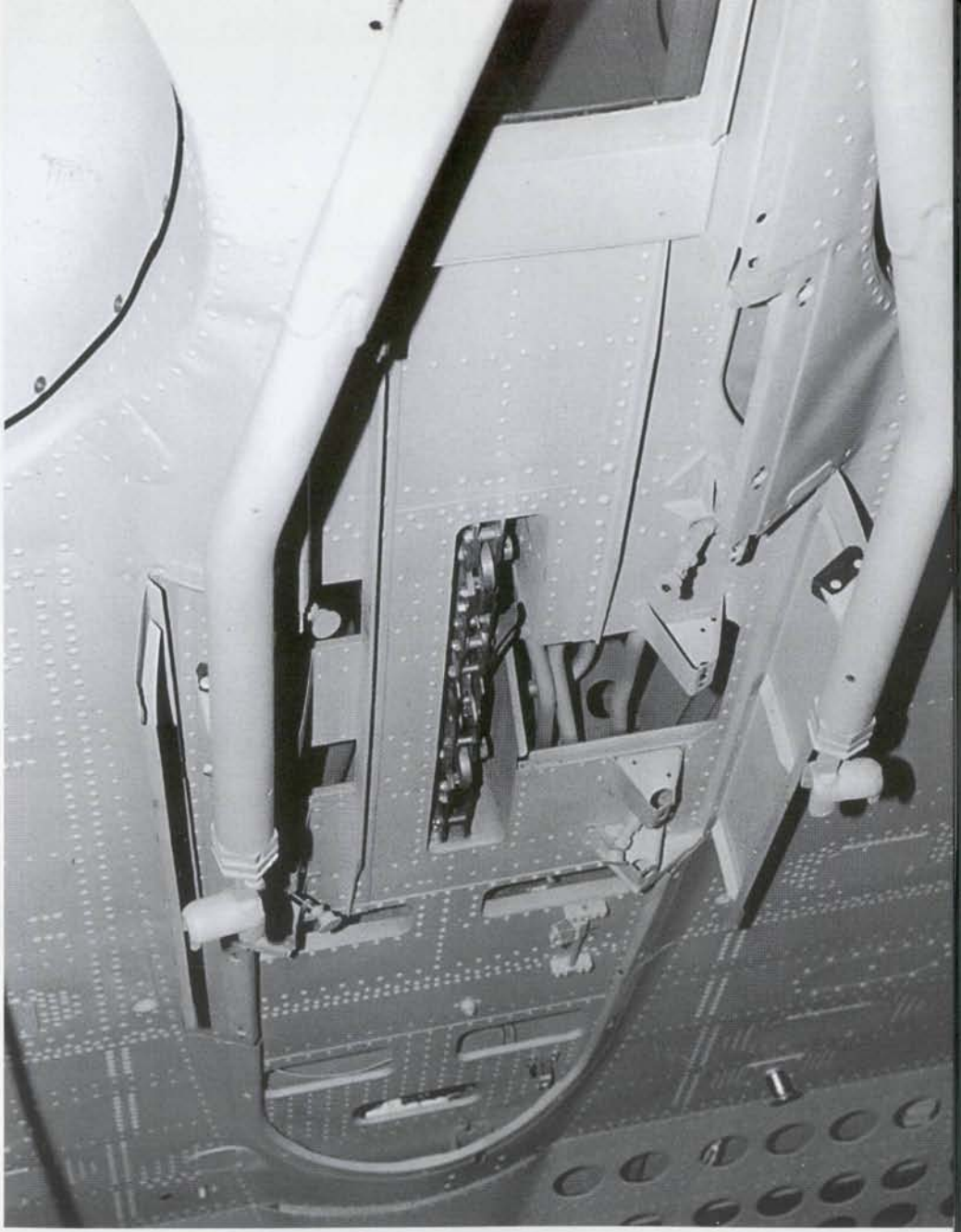
Centerline Bomb Racks

Mk 35 Mod 4



Mk 51 Mod 7

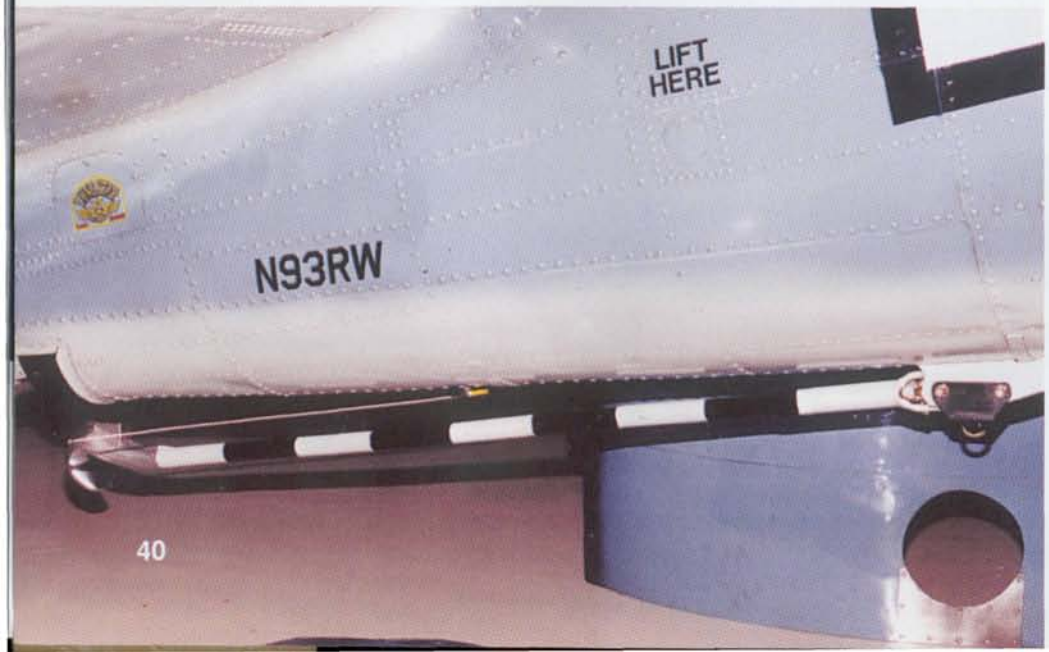




The Mk 35 Mod 4 bomb rack was installed on SBD-1 through -4 aircraft, while later variants were equipped with a Mk 51 Mod 7 rack. The rack is mounted inside a recess in the aircraft's undersurface. This centerline rack accommodated bombs weighing up to 1600 pounds (726 KG). Two small hinged auxiliary panels flanking the centerline rack were opened via Dzus fasteners when bombs larger than 500 pounds were carried. (Dann)

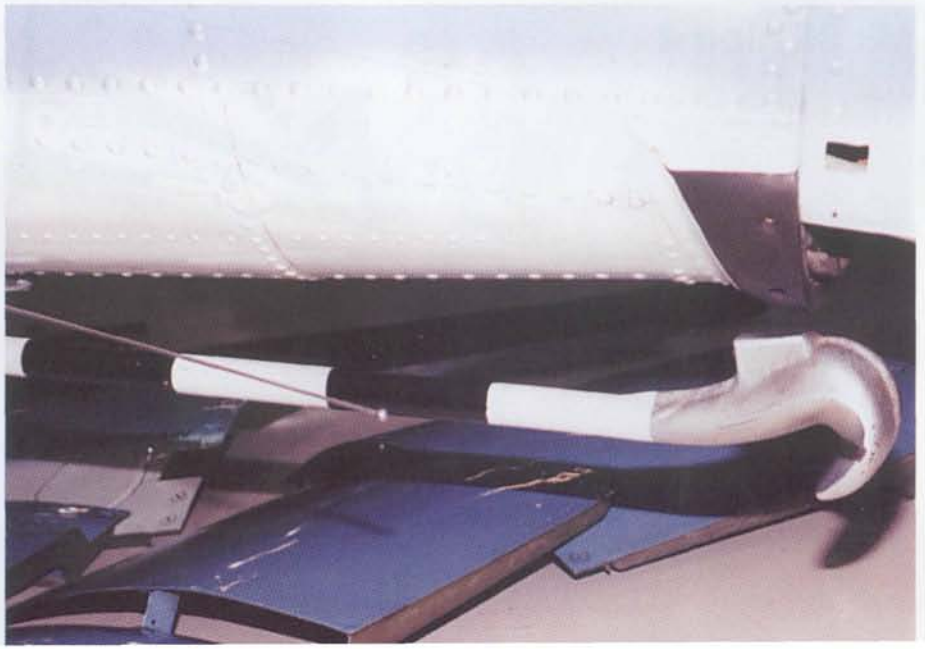
A hook holds the wire radio antenna's aft end to a short mast atop the vertical stabilizer. This 21 foot (6.4 M) long antenna extended aft from the mast located on the forward fuselage. The white cylindrical object forward of the hook is an insulator, which prevented electrical energy from escaping the wire. (Phillips)

The arresting hook's black and white bands improved its visibility by deck crews. The hook's attachment fitting is located at fuselage Frame 13. The recoil snubbing cylinder is fitted forward of this point inside the fuselage. It ensures rapid hook extension and dampens any rebound of the hook while extended. The tail hook has 15° of motion to either side of the fuselage, but a centering spring is installed to reduce that tendency. (Dann)



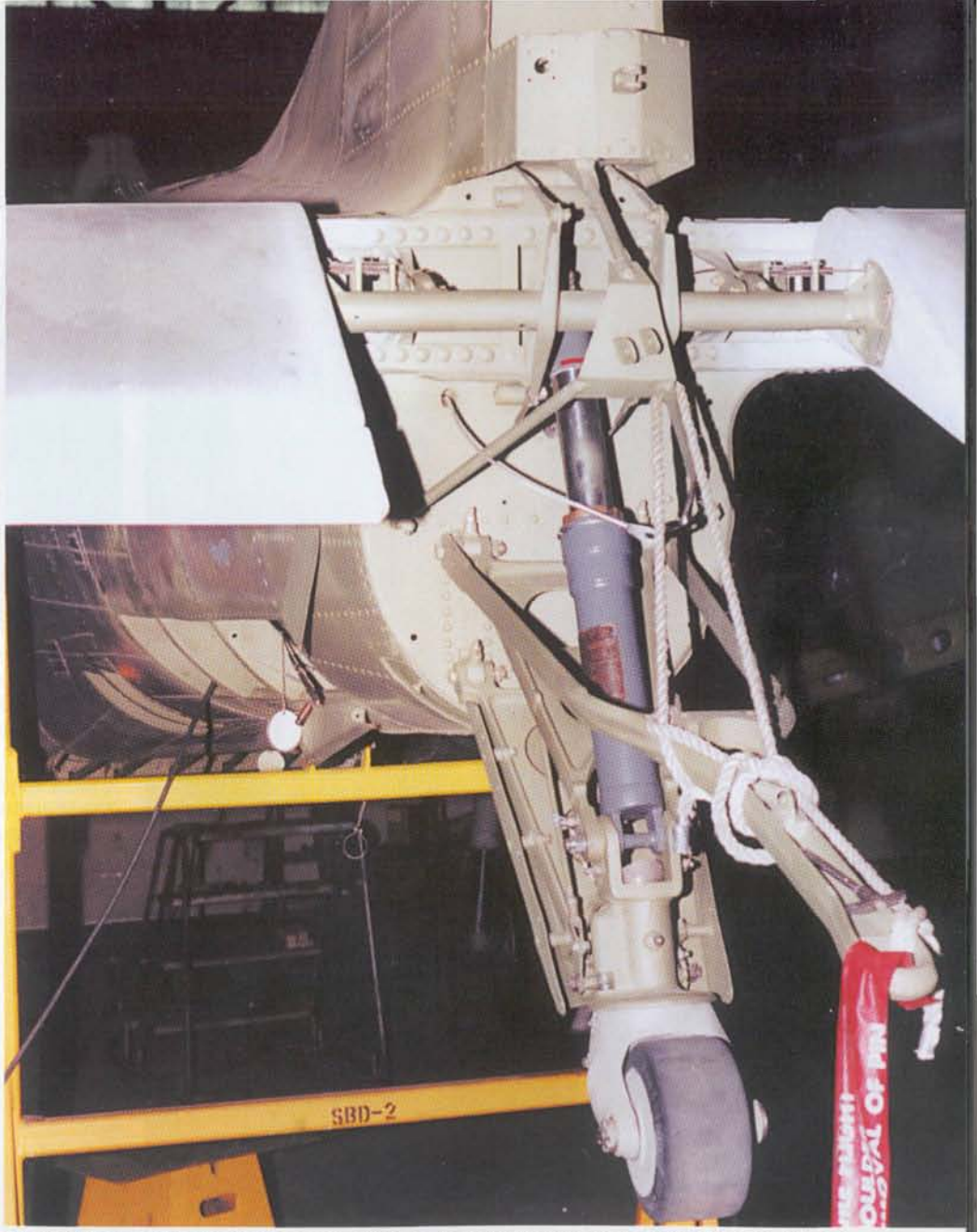
The arresting hook's pivot point is mounted on the aft fuselage centerline at fuselage Frame 13. The pilot lowered this hook using a lever in the cockpit's left side. This hook is made from chrome molybdenum steel for strength and durability at sea. The Army's A-24 Banshee deleted the tail hook, but retained the pivot point fairing. (Dann)

A rubber stop is installed at fuselage Frame 17 to prevent fuselage undersurface damage should the arresting hook rebound. The hook end is left in natural metal, while the rest of its body is painted in black and white bands. The whip radio antenna beside the hook is part of the modern equipment essential to safe operation in today's flying environment. (Dann)

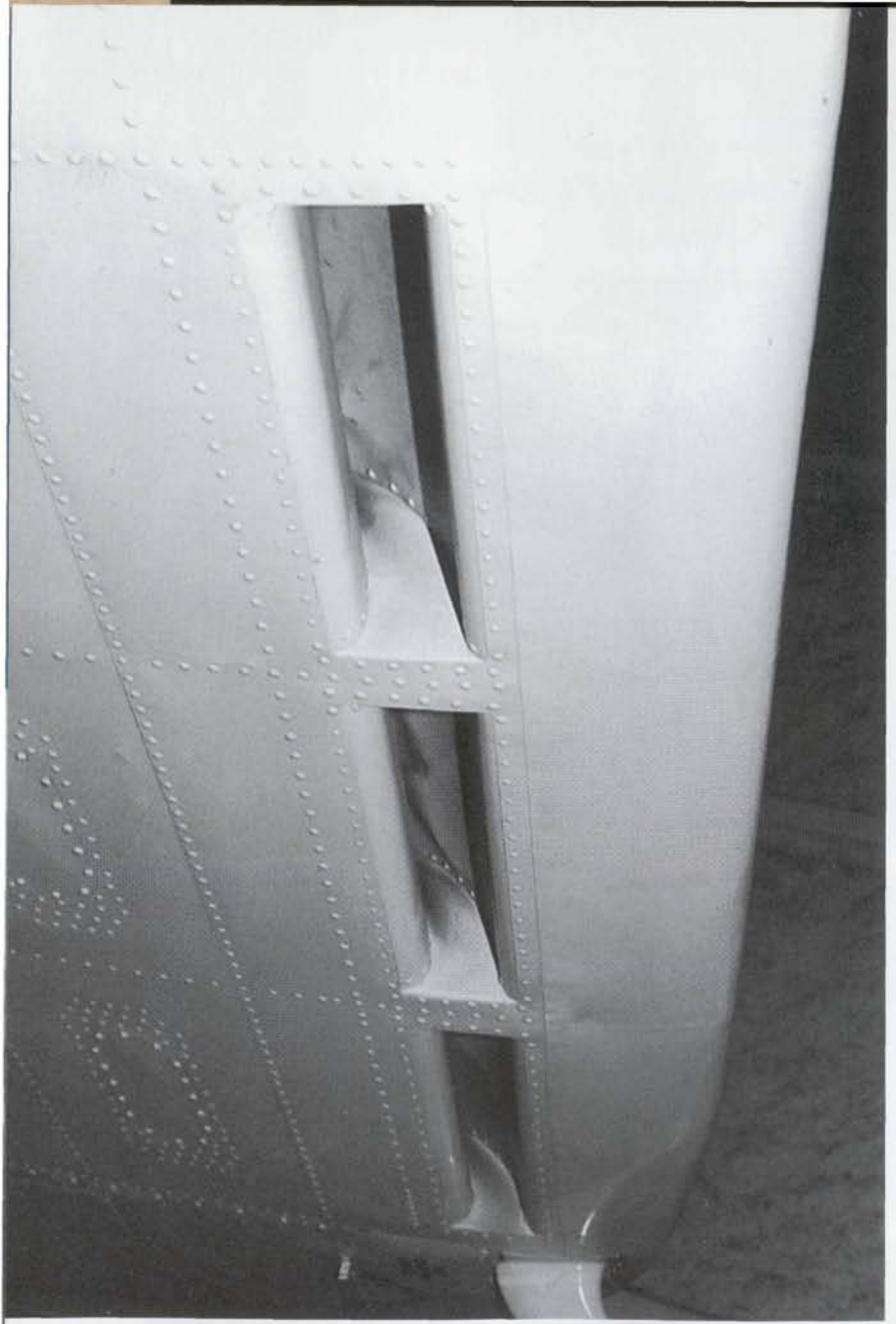


A clear tail position light is mounted on the tail fairing under the rudder. The hinged catapult hold back fitting immediately aft of the tail wheel is held in place by spring tension when not in use. It also serves as a tail tie-down when securing the SBD to the flight deck. (Dann)

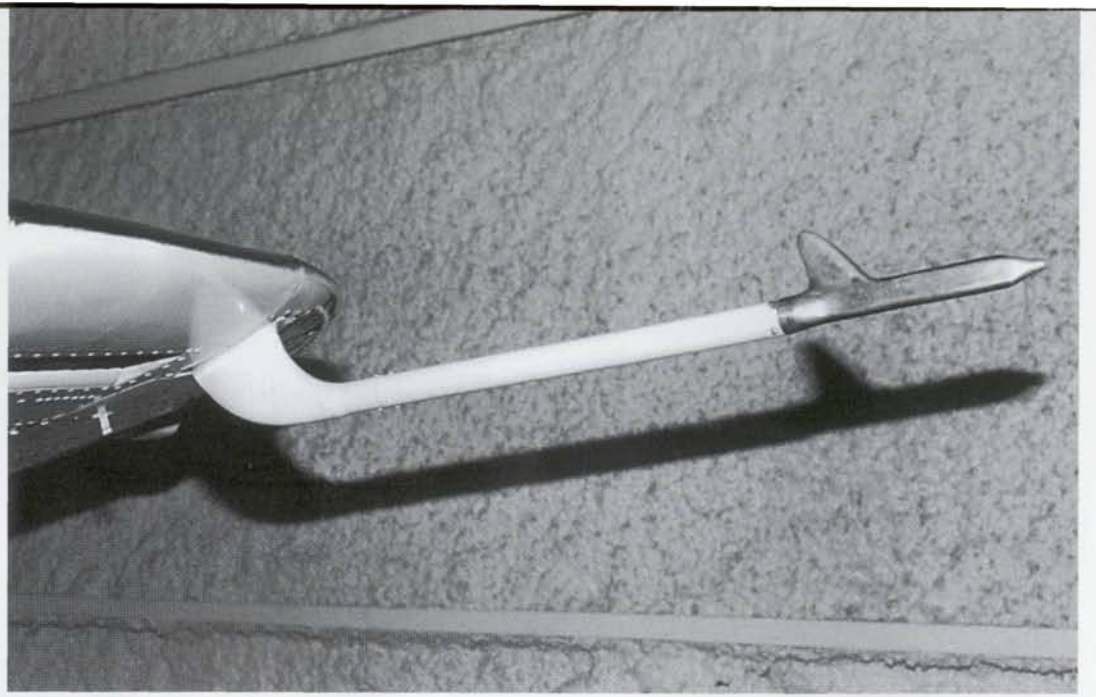
The SBD's tail wheel assembly employed either a 6 inch (15.2 cm) by 3.5 inch (8.9 cm) solid rubber tire for carrier use (here), or an inflatable 12 inch (30.5 cm) tire for land based aircraft. The tail wheel is non-steerable, but is free to swivel 360° when unlocked. It can be locked in the trail position using a lever located on the pilot's left console. (Dann)



The tail fairing is removed from an SBD undergoing restoration. This exposes the tail wheel strut and its attachment to the bulkhead. This Dauntless has the solid rubber tail wheel for carrier operations installed. The catapult holdback is attached to the same mount as the tail wheel's upper drag link. Both elevators are connected by an elevator torque tube, which allowed for simultaneous movement of the port and starboard elevators. (Dann)



All SBDs were equipped with fixed 'mailbox' slots in the outboard wing sections, just aft of the leading edge. These slots were an attempt to correct poor aileron control at low speeds, which had been encountered during prototype testing in 1938 and 1939. The pitot tube fairing is mounted outboard of the slots on the port wing. An access door for the tie down ring is located immediately aft of the pitot tube fairing. (Dann)

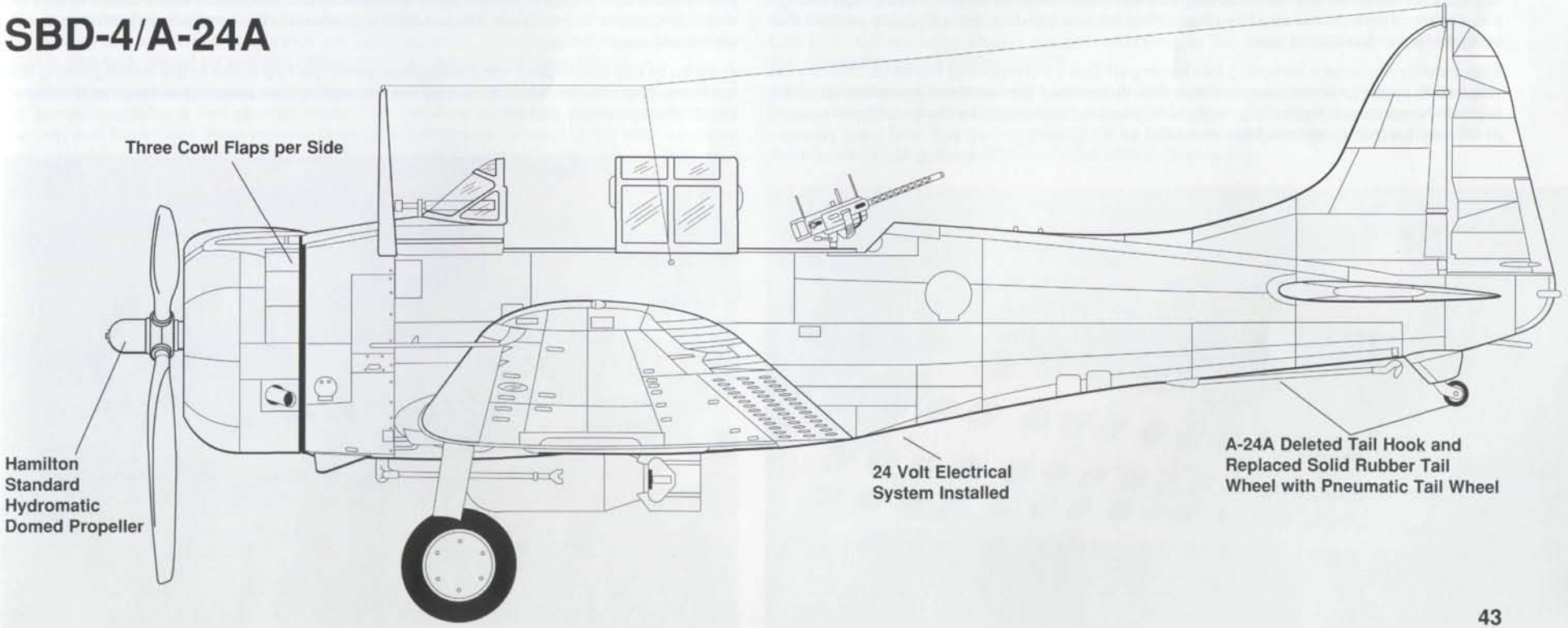


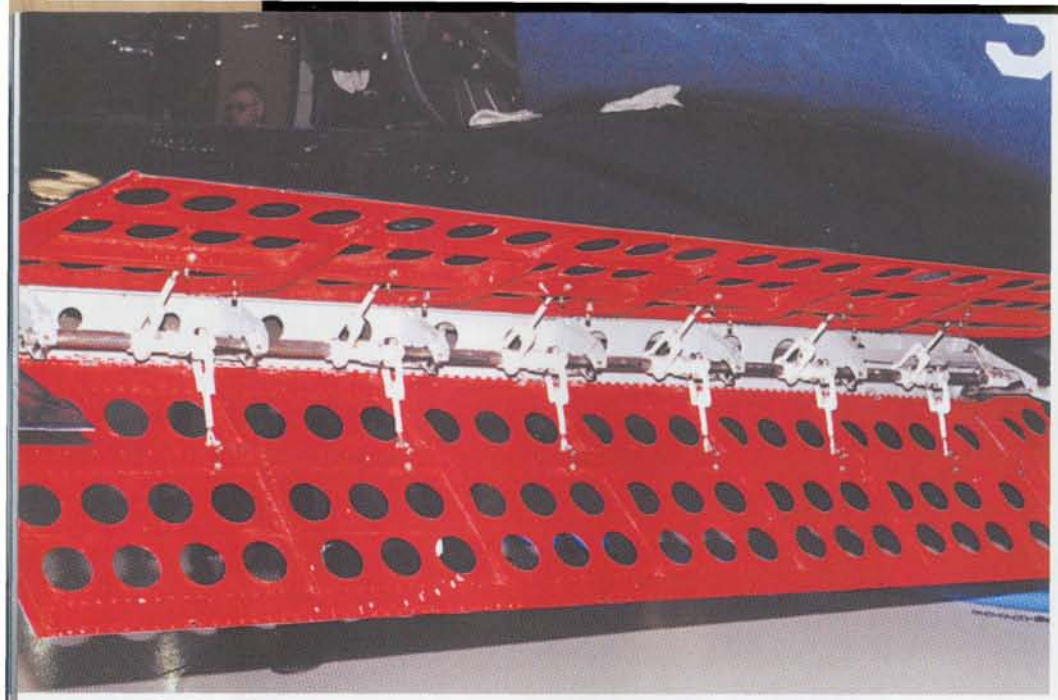
The pitot tube on all SBD variants was located at the port wing tip. Its tip was electrically heated to prevent ice buildup in icing conditions. Air collected by this tip was fed into the air speed indicator located in both the front and rear cockpits. The outboard edge of the 'mailbox' slot is located near the pitot tube fairing. (Dann)

A retractable landing light was located under the port wing. This clear light opened forward when lit. Rivets in this area are not flush with the wing surface. In fact, the only area of the wing that had flush riveting was the leading edge cap. (Dann)

An SBD-4 Dauntless (22-C-13) assigned to Composite Squadron Twenty Two (VC 22) prepares to recover aboard the light carrier USS INDEPENDENCE (CVL-22) on 1 May 1943. Its main landing gear and tail hook are both extended for the landing. Landing gear oleo (shock absorbing) struts are at full extension, since there is no load on them. The SBD-4 was externally identical to the earlier SBD-3, except for the Hamilton Standard Hydromatic domed propeller. This Dauntless is painted in the three-tone camouflage scheme the US Navy adopted on 5 January 1943. This scheme consisted of Semi-Gloss Sea Blue (FS25042) upper surfaces, Non-Specular (NS) Intermediate Blue (FS35164) sides, and NS Insignia White (FS37875) undersurfaces. The fuselage code is NS Black. (Tailhook Association via PHCS Miller)

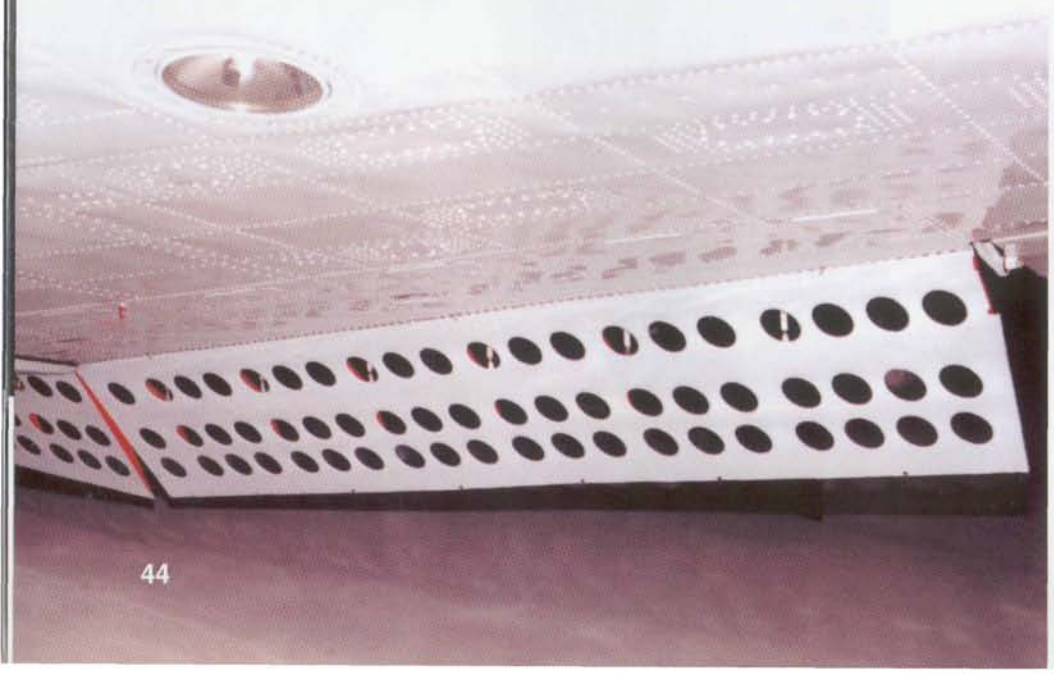
SBD-4/A-24A

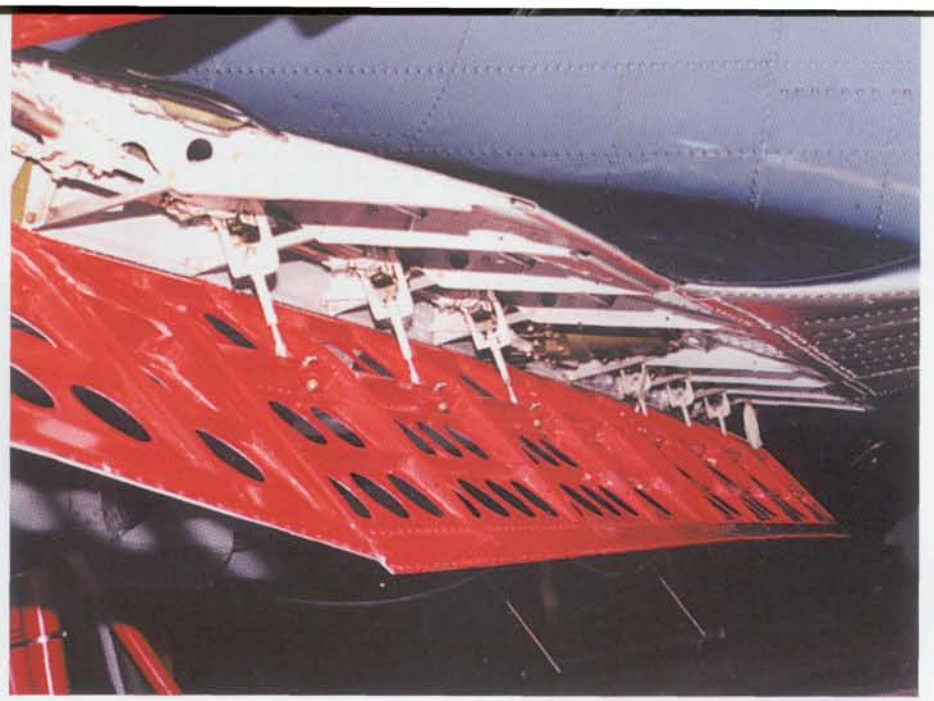

Three Cowl Flaps per Side
Hamilton Standard Hydromatic Domed Propeller
24 Volt Electrical System Installed
A-24A Deleted Tail Hook and Replaced Solid Rubber Tail Wheel with Pneumatic Tail Wheel



The Dauntless' trademark feature was its perforated landing/diving flaps. Circular perforations prevented tail section buffeting when the flaps were deployed. These flaps were in five sections: three lower and two upper. Flap section interiors were typically painted Flat Insignia Red (FS31136). (Dann)

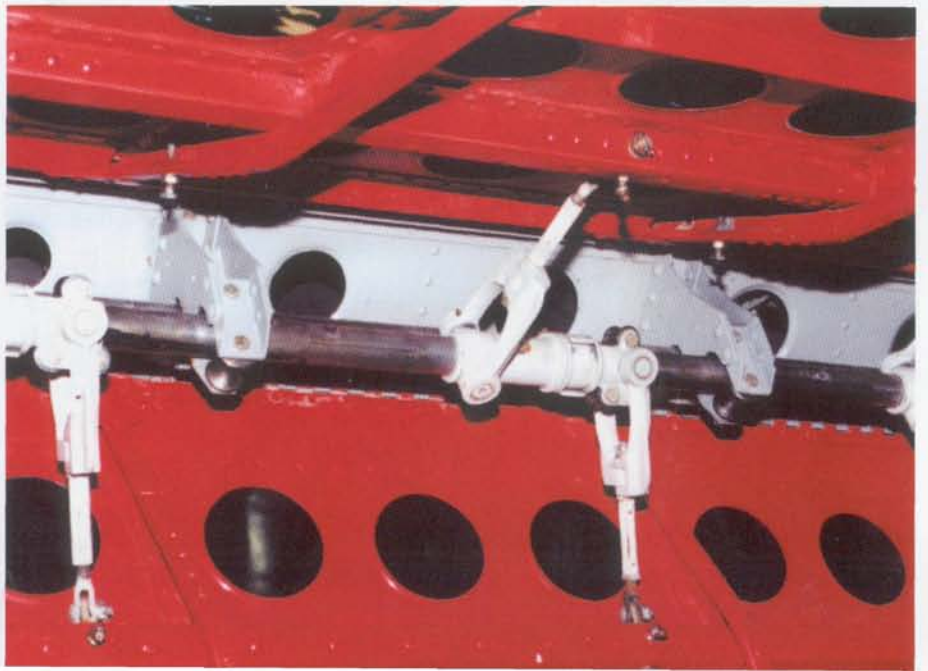
Flap exterior surfaces – including this lower port flap – were painted the same color as the respective upper or lower wing surface. The three lower flap sections extended up to 45° when they were used as landing flaps. In dive brake flap usage, the lower sections opened at 42° and the two upper sections extended to 37°. (Dann)





The flaps were hydraulically actuated via landing flap and diving flap selectors on the pilot's starboard cockpit console. A hydraulic actuator painted Zinc Chromate is located inside the center flap section. The actuator operates all flap sections via actuating tubes within the wing. (Dann)

A series of flap connecting link assemblies joined the flap tubes to the landing/diving flap surfaces. Flap tube movement caused the connecting link assemblies to move the flap to the desired position. (Dann)

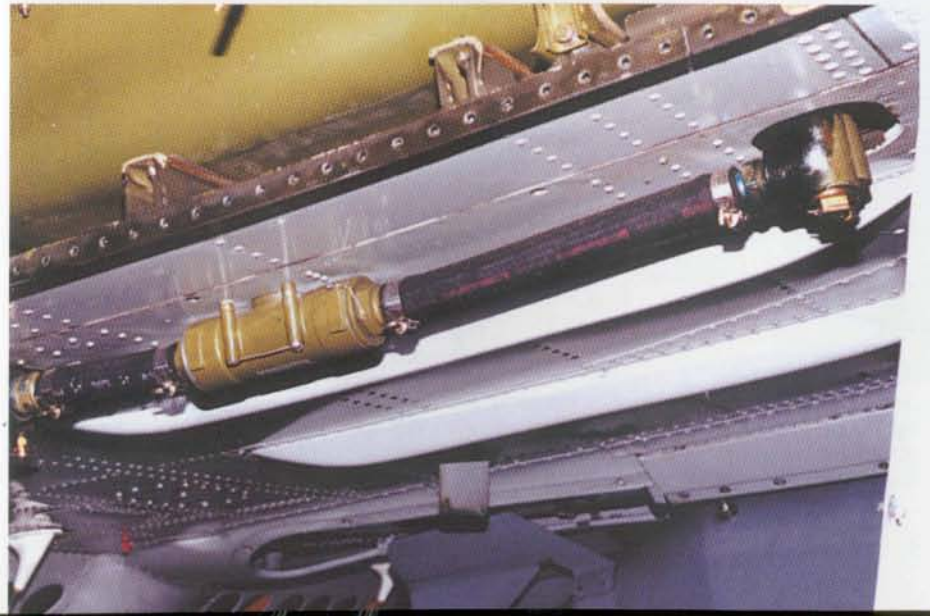


The SBD's two main fuel tanks are located to port and starboard in the center wing section. Each 75 US Gallon (284 L) capacity tank is self-sealing, which prevented fuel leakage due to combat fire. Self-sealing tanks were introduced on the SBD-3. The tanks are held in place by felt padded straps, which are unstrapped on the Lone Star Flight Museum's SBD-5. The tank rested on padded stiffeners within the wing section. (Dann)

Fuel (aviation gasoline) leaves the main tanks and flows into fore and aft sumps, with the aft sump containing a fuel strainer drain. The fuel then flows to a sump selector valve (center) and from there flows inboard through a fuel line to connect to the main/auxiliary tank selector valve. An aerodynamic fairing covers this assembly on the wing undersurface. (Dann)

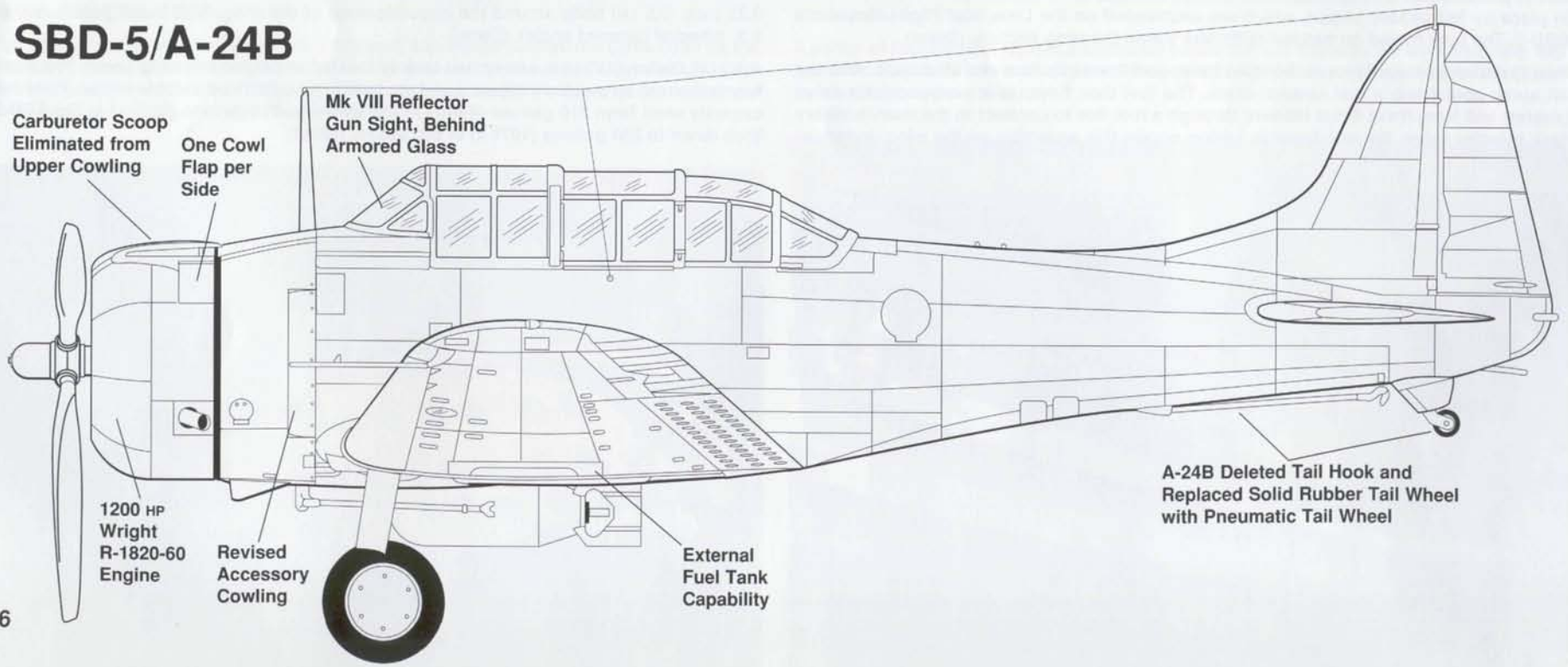
The self-sealing fuel bladder was enclosed within an aluminum shell for protection against light gunfire. The aft portion of the 'Station 66' bulkhead was removed for fuel system maintenance. The outer wing panels are attached to the center section by a series of 0.25 inch (0.6 CM) bolts around the circumference of the wing. SBD outer panels had an 8.5° dihedral (upward angle). (Dann)

A 52 US Gallon (197 L) auxiliary fuel tank is located in each outer wing panel. The auxiliary tanks rest on padded stiffeners and are held in place with adjustable straps. Total fuel capacity went from 210 gallons (795 L) in the SBD-1 to 310 gallons (1173 L) in the SBD-2, then down to 284 gallons (1075 L) in the SBD-6. (Dann)



The SBD-5 was the definitive production version of the SBD/A-24 series. Douglas built 2965 SBD-5s, 60 SBD-5As (US Army Air Forces aircraft delivered to the Marines), and 615 A-24Bs. The primary difference from earlier versions was an uprated 1200 HP Wright R-1820-60 engine. The cowl design also changed to include a single cowl flap on either side of the aircraft. A large accessory cooling vent on the accessory cowling was repositioned as well. The SBD-5 was also the first in the series to be plumbed for external fuel tanks. This Dauntless is an A-24B (42-54682) painted in USN markings and belonging to the Lone Star Flight Museum in Galveston, Texas. (Phillips)

SBD-5/A-24B


Carburetor Scoop Eliminated from Upper Cowling
One Cowl Flap per Side
Mk VIII Reflector Gun Sight, Behind Armored Glass
1200 HP Wright R-1820-60 Engine
Revised Accessory Cowling
External Fuel Tank Capability
A-24B Deleted Tail Hook and Replaced Solid Rubber Tail Wheel with Pneumatic Tail Wheel

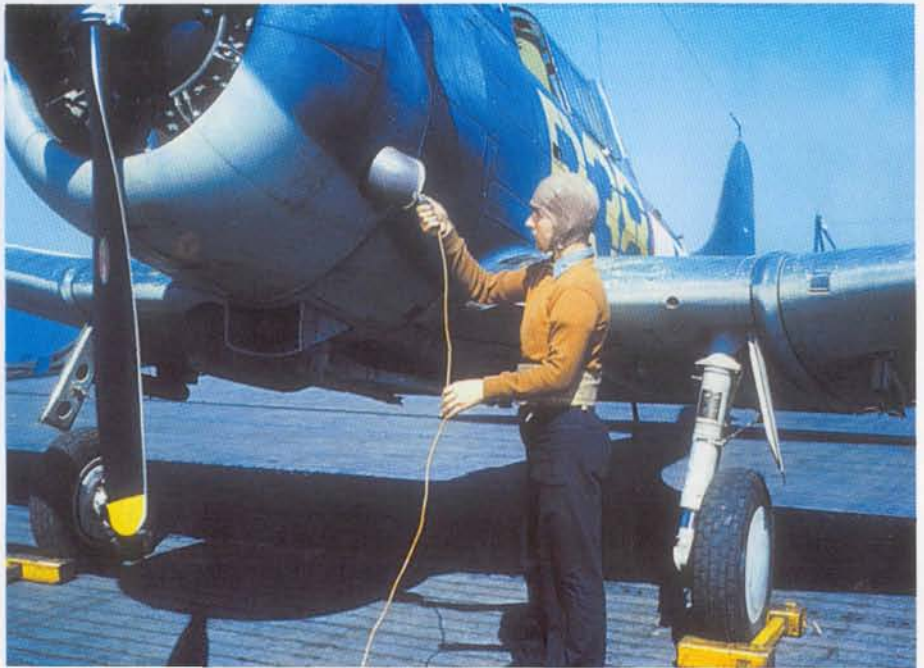
A-24 Banshees roll down the final assembly production line at Douglas' El Segundo, California factory in mid-to late 1942. They are painted in the standard USAAF camouflage scheme of Dark Olive Drab 41 (FS34087) upper surfaces over Neutral Gray 43 (FS36173) undersurfaces. Propeller blades and spinners are Non-Specular (NS, or Flat) Flat Black (FS37038), while blade tips are NS Orange-Yellow (FS33538). All Dauntless variants were built in El Segundo , except for the 615 A-24B Banshees that were manufactured at the Douglas plant in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A Consolidated B-24D Liberator is parked beside the A-24 production line. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

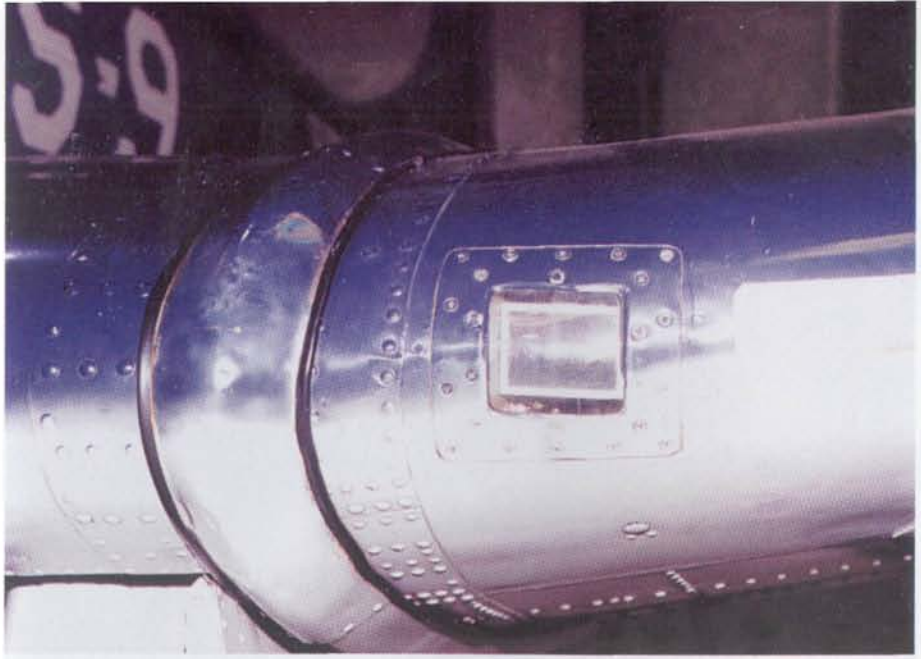
This is photographic proof that early Dauntlesses left the factory in the overall Aluminum (FS17178) lacquer and Glossy Orange-Yellow (FS13538) finish. This Dauntless (BuNo 2106) was recovered from Lake Michigan and meticulously restored. Portions of the aircraft remain unpainted, which allowed the original paint to be seen. (Owen Miller)

A retractable tie-down ring is located near the wingtips. This training command aircraft had the Insignia Red bordered national insignia used July to September of 1943. The Orange-Yellow code R38 is painted on the port wing undersurface. This SBD-5 is also equipped with Yagi ASV radar, with the port wing antenna located near the landing light. (Tailhook)

Two petty officers service the port landing gear on an SBD-5. The wheel and axle covers have been removed. Dauntless landing gear wheels were made of cast magnesium with inboard mounted steel brake drums. Main gear tires were 30 inches (76.2 cm) in circumference by 7 inches (17.8 cm) wide. (Tailhook)

A deck crewman attaches a grounding wire to the port exhaust stub of the same SBD-5 (R38). This was done prior to refueling and the wire prevented static electric buildup, which could set off a fire. The Dauntless is painted with NS Blue-Gray (approximately FS36176) upper surfaces over NS Light Gray (FS36440) undersurfaces. (Tailhook)

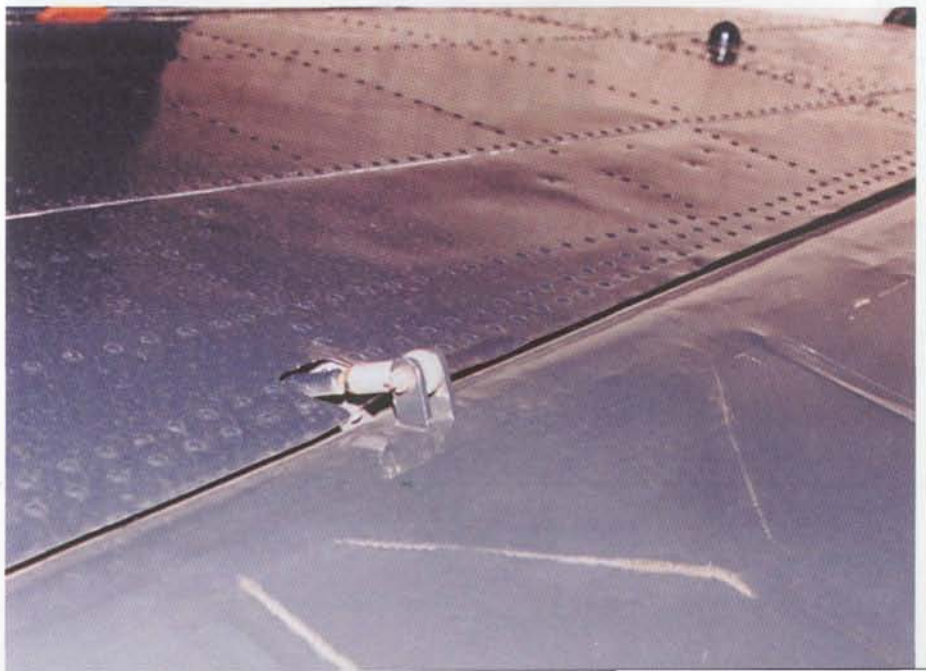




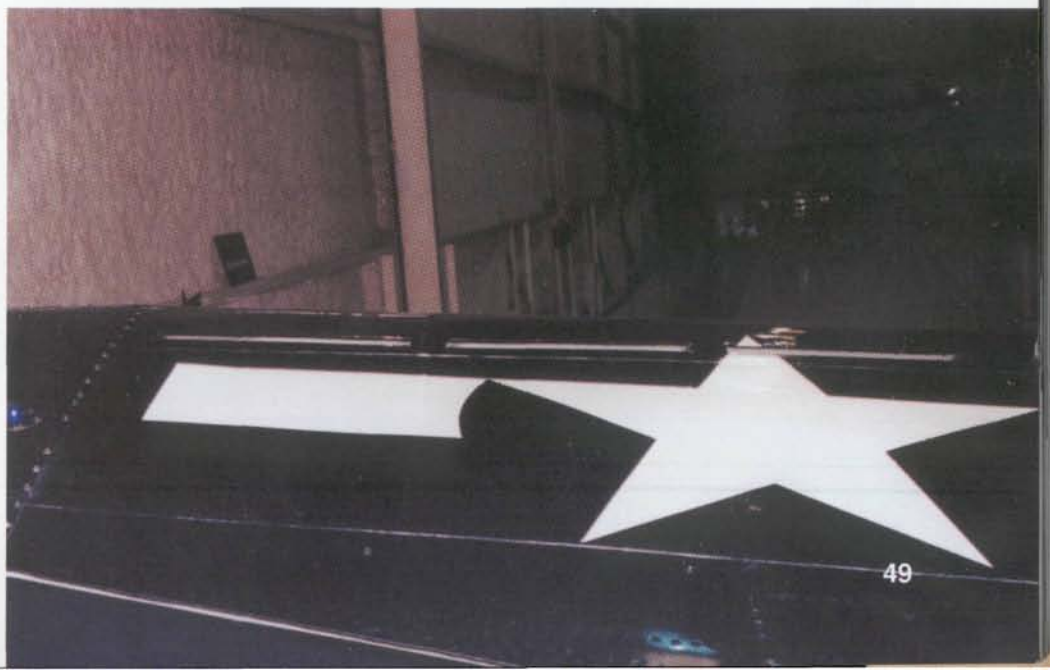
The approach lamp is located just outboard of Wing Station 66 on the SBD's port wing. This light allowed the Landing Signal Officer (LSO) to determine the aircraft's proper attitude during landing operations. A fairing covers Wing Station 66, where the outer wing sections were bolted to the wing center section. (Dann)

The Dauntless' ailerons are made from aluminum, but are covered with fabric. The aileron is attached to the wing via three hinges visible on the wing's lower surface. A trim tab is located only on the left aileron and the tab's actuating rod protrudes through the top of the aileron fabric. The red port wing formation light is mounted near the wing tip. (Dann)

The aileron actuating rod protrudes through the top of the upper wing skin. This rod moved the aileron up or down in response to control stick movements. A green formation light is located on the starboard wing inboard of the green wingtip light. (Dann)

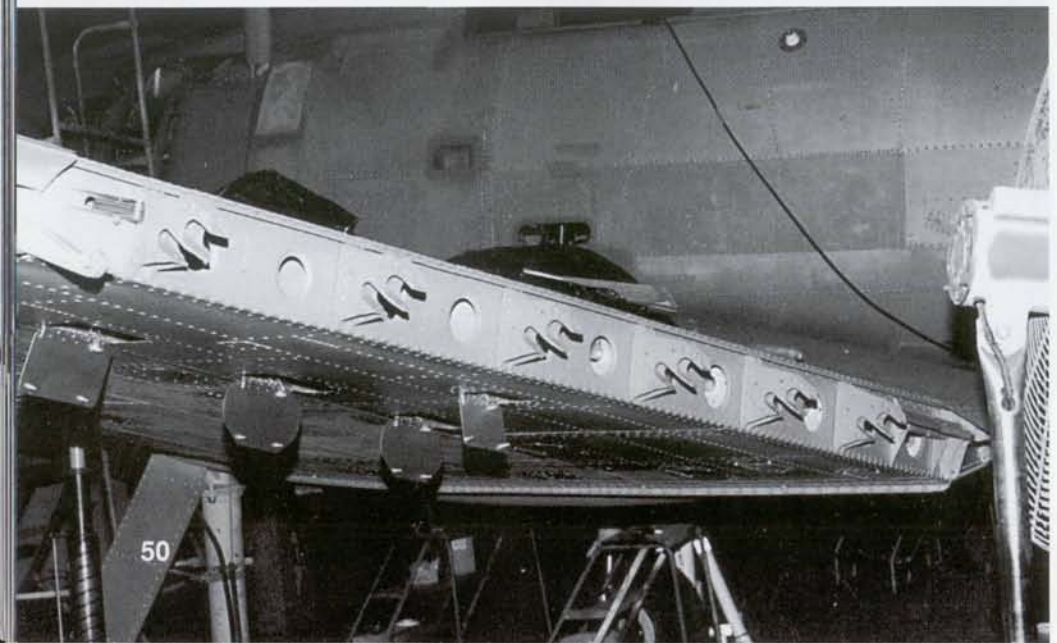


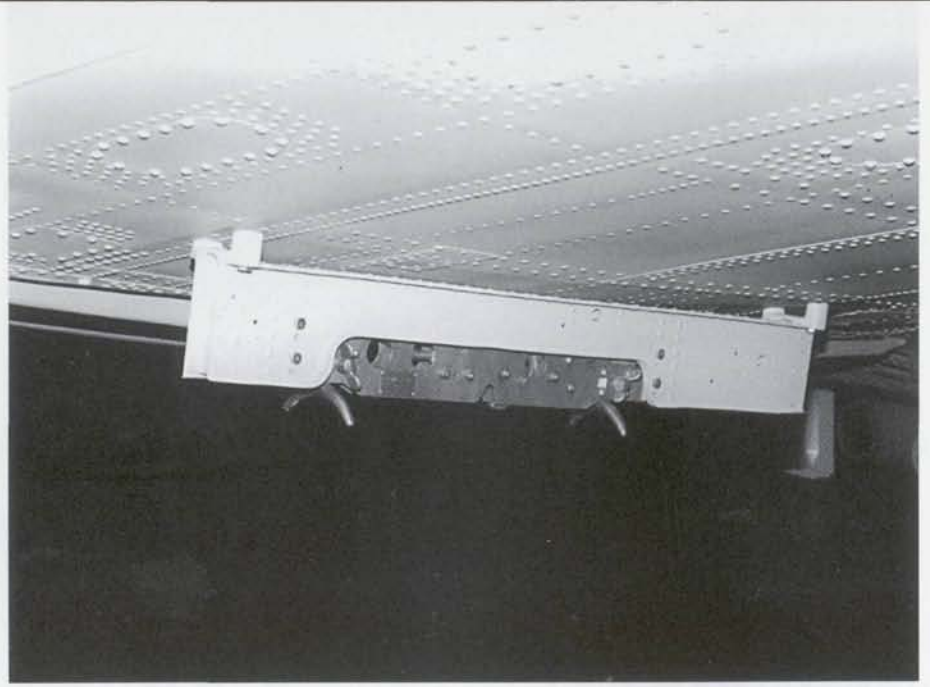
Three 'mail box' slots located outboard on each wing directed air over the upper wing surface. These slots enhanced low speed handling characteristics. A row of screws fasten the wingtip to the outer wing panel. (Dann)



A bridle hook for catapult launches is mounted under each wing center section. The steel bridle cable connected the port and starboard hooks with the catapult to pull the aircraft forward on launch. The fuel sumps and selector valve are covered by the large fairing inboard of the bridle hook. The Station 66 aerodynamic fairing runs beside the fuel sumps and selector valve fairing. (Dann)

This SBD-2 (BuNo 2106) underwent restoration at the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Florida. The flap tube mounting brackets are fitted to the wing's trailing edge, while the flaps themselves are mounted to the trailing edge using a piano hinge. (Dann)

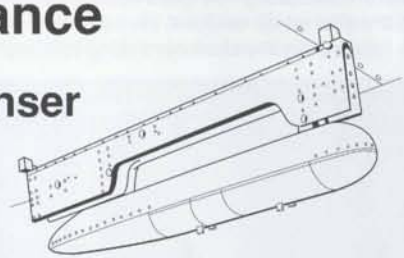


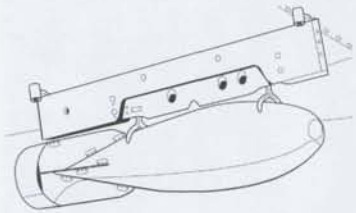


The Dauntless could be equipped with two Mk 50-1 bomb racks on either wing, just outboard of Station 66. These racks carried ordnance weighing up to 325 pounds (147 KG). This included practice munitions, general-purpose bombs, or external fuel tanks on the SBD-5 and SBD-6. Other ordnance mounted on this rack included smoke tanks and gun pods. (Dann)

Underwing Ordnance

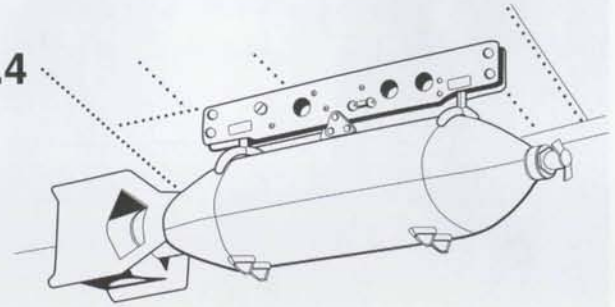
Practice Bomb Dispenser





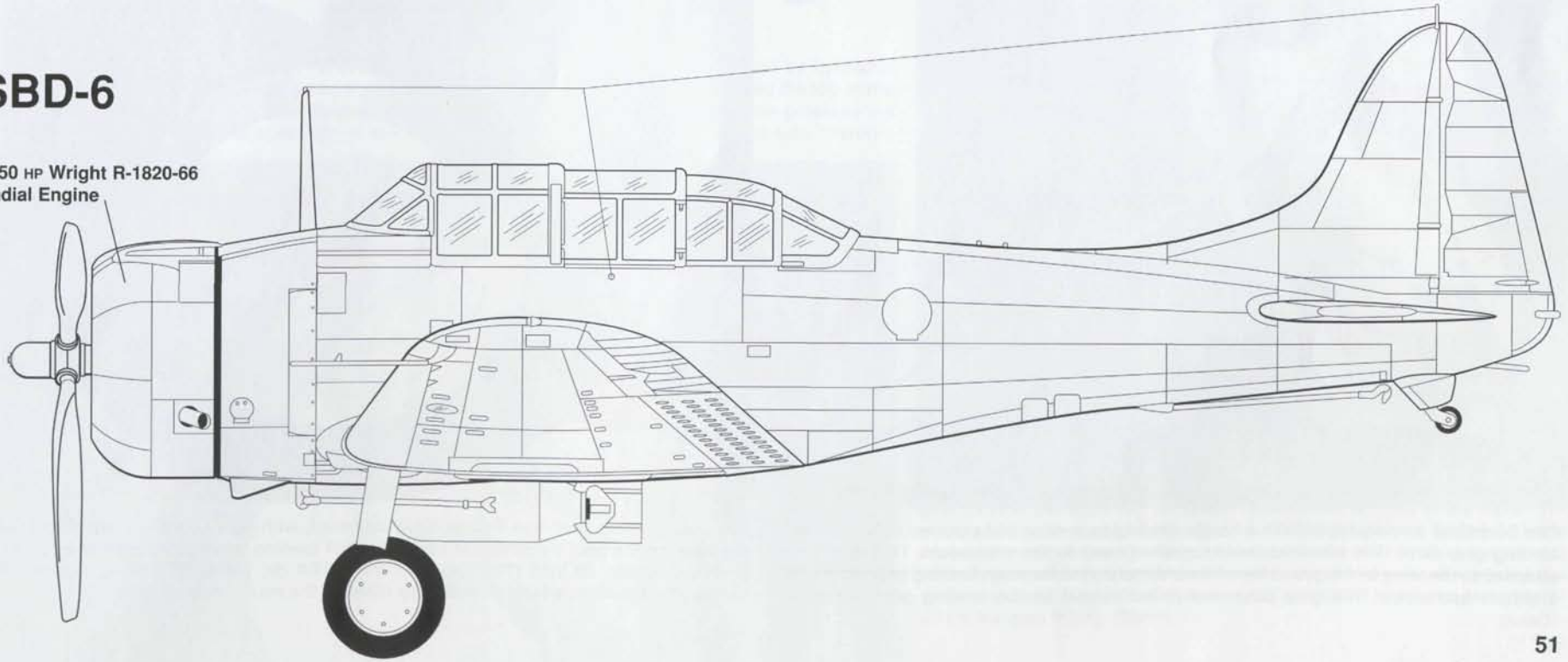
Single Practice Bomb

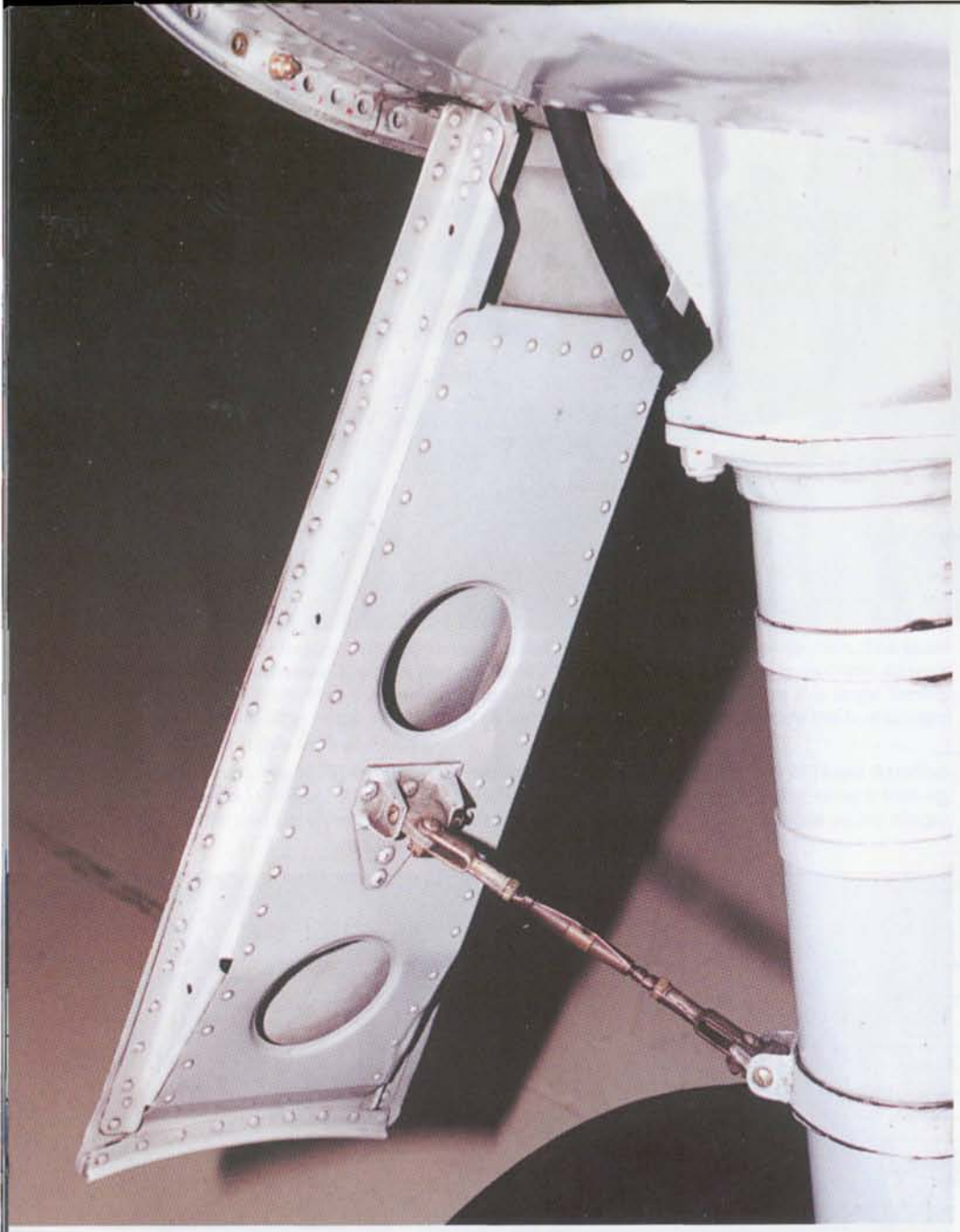
100 Pound (45.4 KG) General Purpose (GP) Bomb



The final Dauntless variant was the SBD-6. Douglas built 450 examples between March and July of 1944. The primary difference between the SBD-5 and -6 was the installation of a 1350 HP Wright R-1829-66 Cyclone engine, which had an increase of 150 HP over the SBD-5's R-1820-60 powerplant. This SBD-6 (2) was assigned to Marine Scout Bombing Squadron Two Thirty One (VMSB-231), whose 'Ace of Spades' logo is painted below the windshield. Twenty three white bomb mission marks are painted under the pilot's cockpit. The inflated tail wheel tire indicated that this aircraft was land-based. The tail wheel fairing has also been removed, but not the tail hook. The 'Yagi' ASB radar antenna is mounted beneath the port wing. (SDAM)

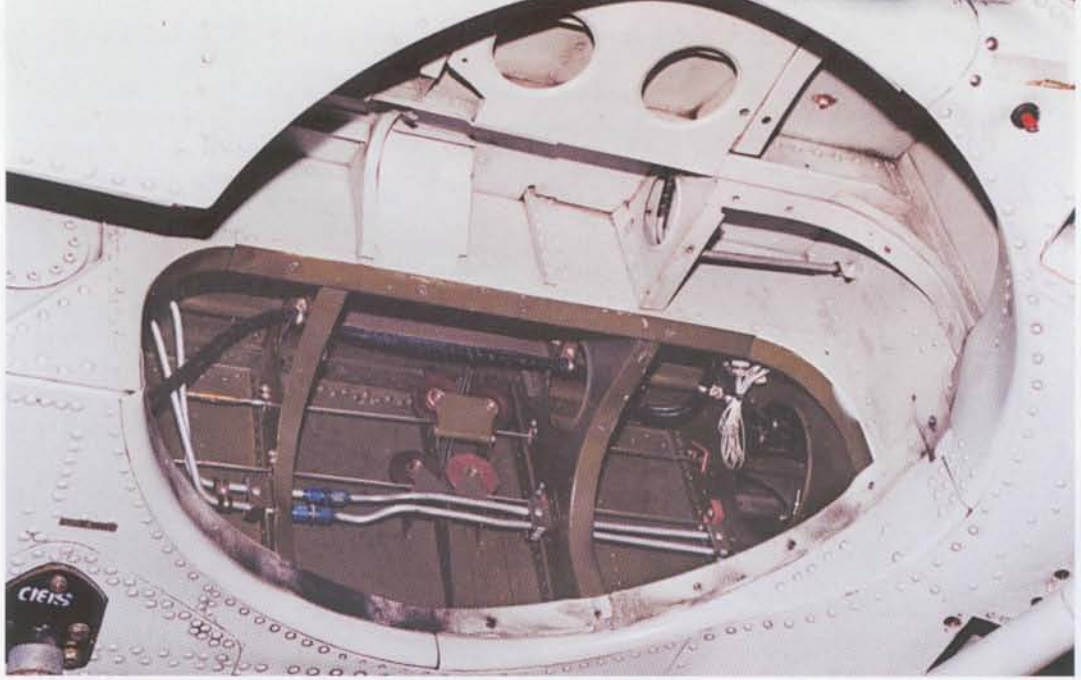
SBD-6





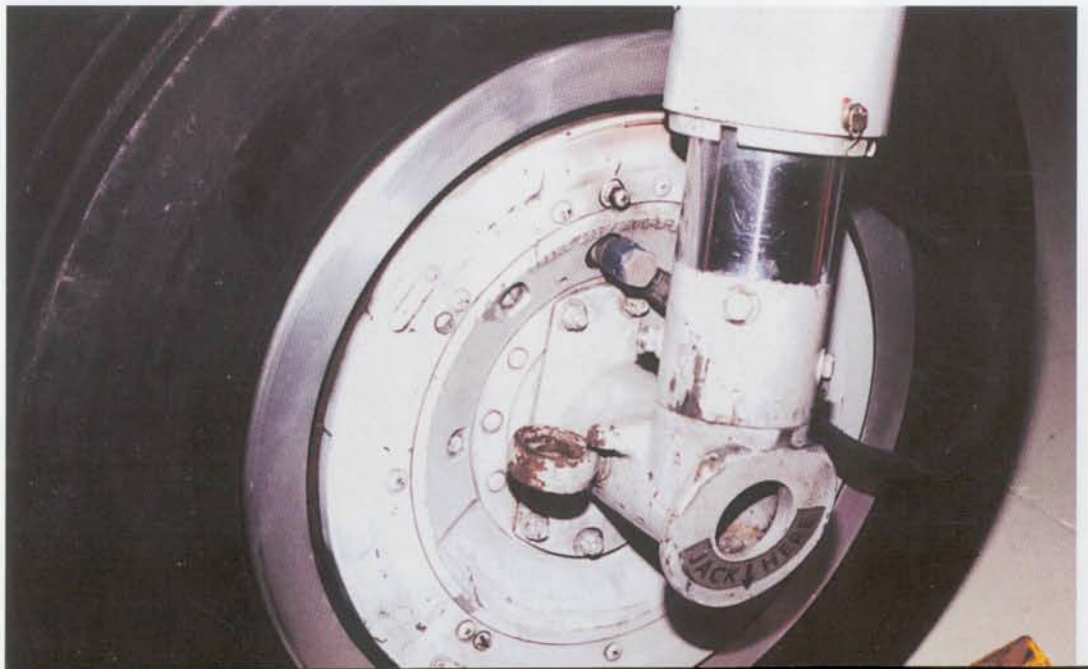
The Dauntless was equipped with a single landing gear door that covered only the main landing gear strut. The wheel assembly was exposed to the slipstream. This door was attached to the wing by hinges at the outboard end and to the main landing gear strut with a simple turnbuckle. The gear door was pulled closed as the landing gear retracted. (Dann)

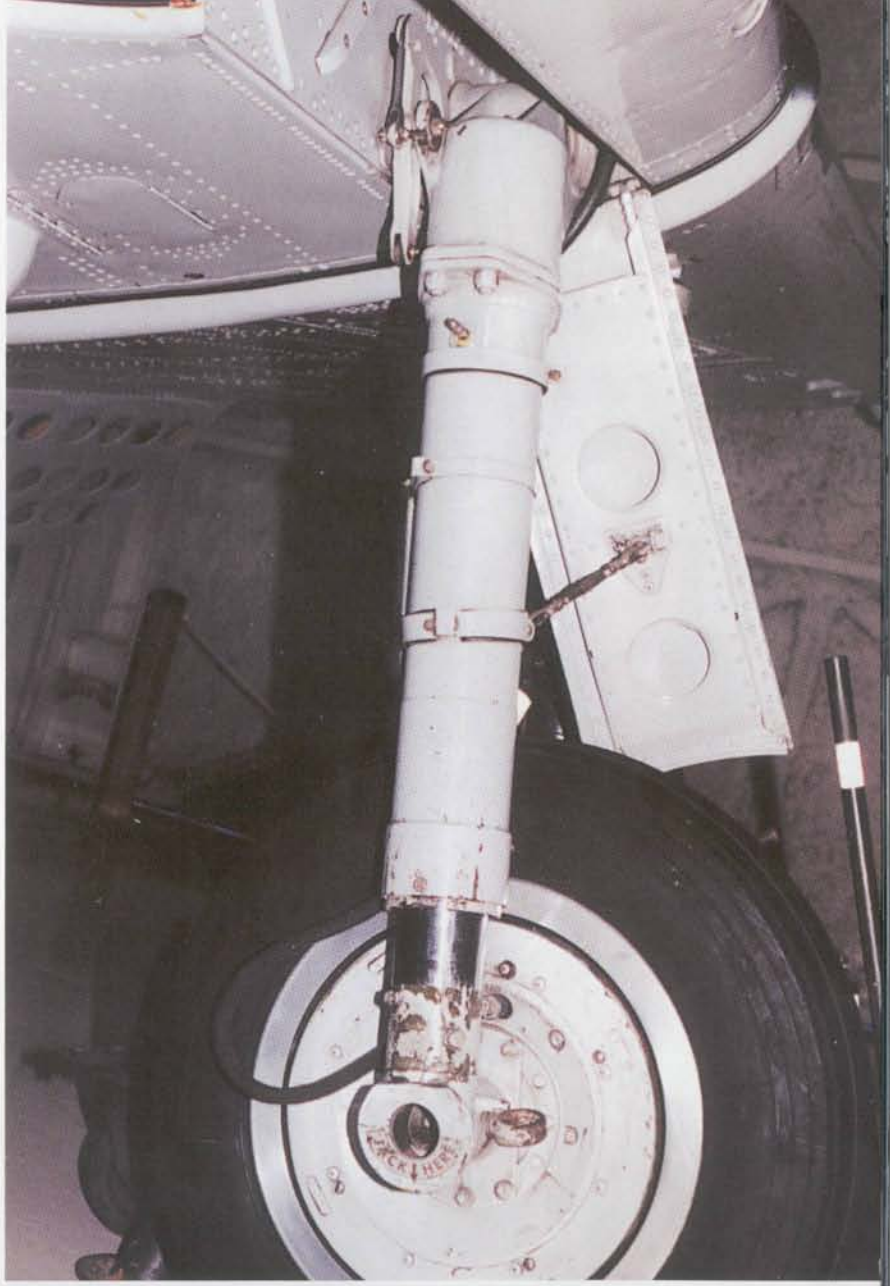
The main landing gear was hydraulically operated, with gear operation performed using the lever on the pilot's instrument panel. Aircraft loading conditions determined inflation pressure on the 30 inch (76.2 cm) by 7 inch (17.8 cm) eight-ply tires. A circular plate secured by three Dzus fasteners usually covered the main wheel. (Dann)



An access panel has been removed from the starboard main landing gear well. This panel was removed for maintenance on this section of the Dauntless. Fluid lines, electrical conduits, and control cables run above the gear well. (Dann)

SBDs were equipped with cast magnesium wheels and drum brakes, which were operated by hydraulic pressure. Hydraulic fluid was supplied by the aircraft hydraulic system. The pilot depressed the top of the rudder pedals to actuate the brakes. Master cylinders attached to the pedals supplied the pressure via tubing and hoses during brake operation. A tow bar ring is mounted on the axle's forward side. (Dann)



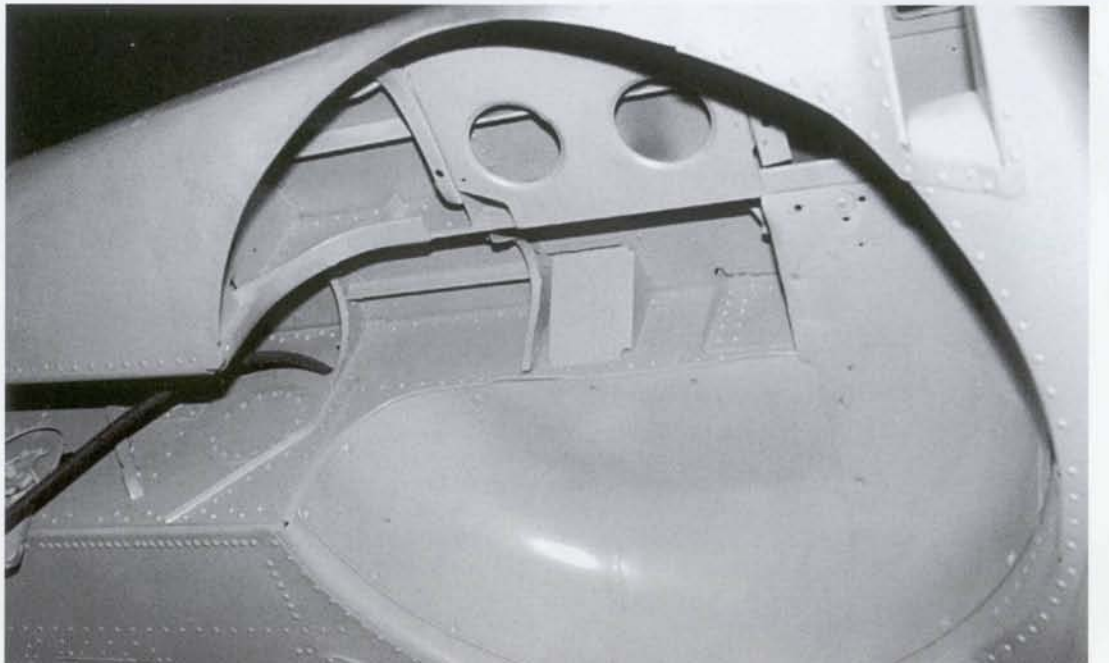


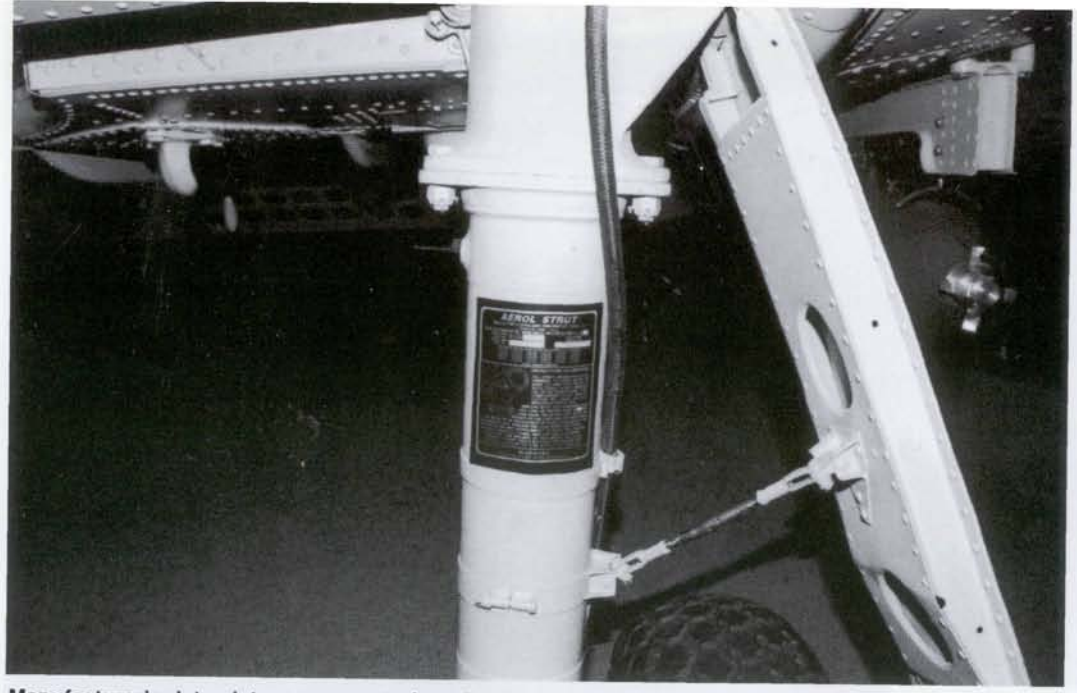
The telescoping shock strut shortens as it retracts to allow the landing gear to fit in the well. The retraction mechanism is fitted at the top of the strut, which is mounted in the gear well. A black rubber hydraulic hose connects the upper and lower gear strut sections. SBD landing gear struts, wheels, gear wells, and gear door inner surfaces were usually painted the same undersurface color as the aircraft. This SBD-5 has these areas painted NS Insignia White. (Dann)

The right main wheel cover is removed on this Dauntless. This exposes the six-spoked cast magnesium wheel. Wheel covers were normally fitted on SBDs to keep foreign objects out of the wheel and brake assembly. Early Dauntlesses had smooth tires, although later variants used treaded tires. The wheel was perpendicular to the wing, but the gear strut was mounted at an inward angle. (Owen Miller)

The port main landing gear well enclosed the entire wheel and strut assembly, although only a door covered the strut. The bridle hook for catapult launches is mounted immediately forward of the well. This hook was not installed on A-24 Banshees built for the USAAF. (Owen Miller)

A hydraulic tube runs from inside the starboard landing gear well down along the gear strut. Wheel well interior colors generally matched the aircraft's underside color, but there were always exceptions to the directives. (Owen Miller)

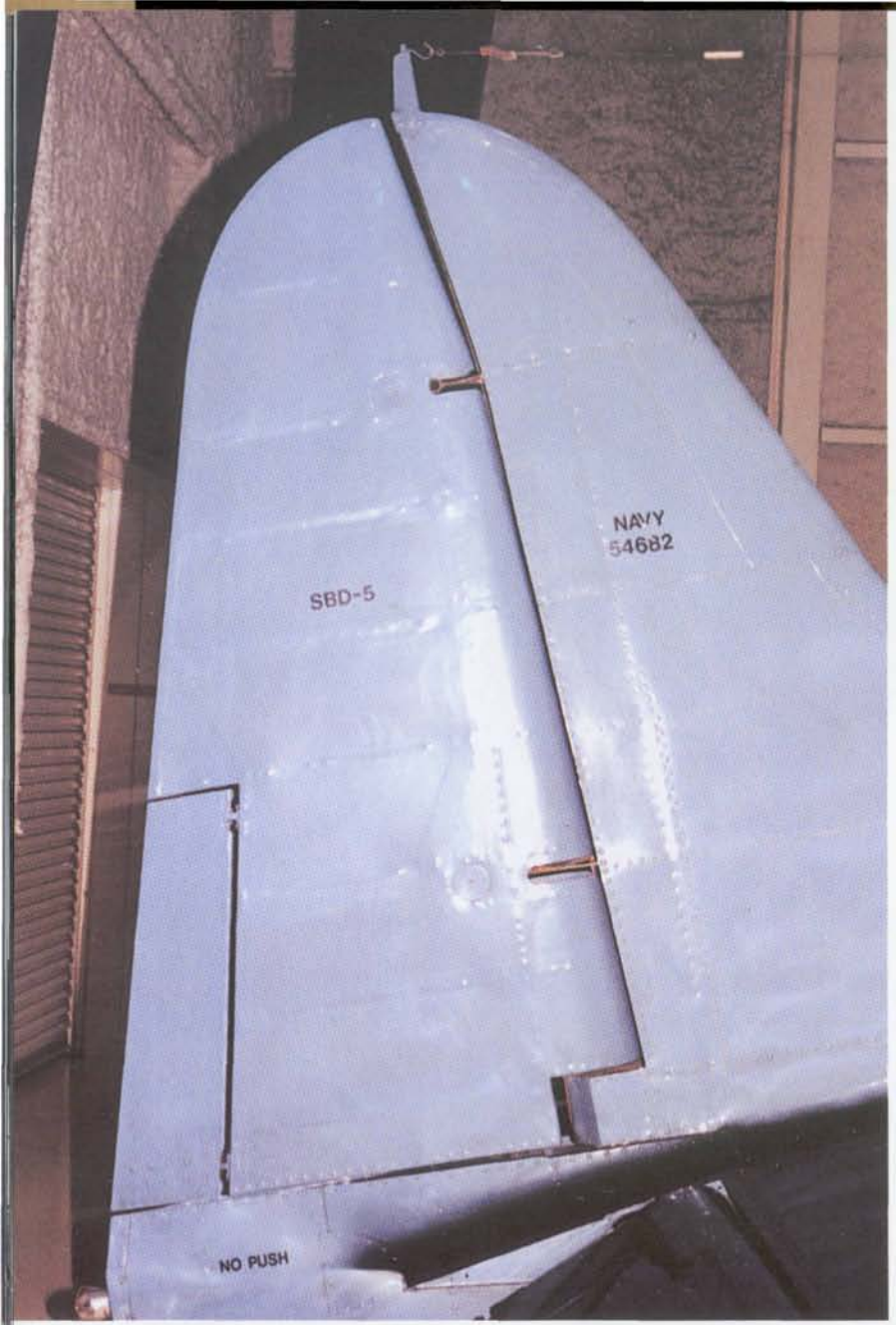




Manufacturer's data plates are mounted on the main landing gear struts. These plates provided servicing instructions and operating pressures for different SBD load regimes. A wheel brake flex line runs down from inside the gear well to the brake assembly. (Dann)

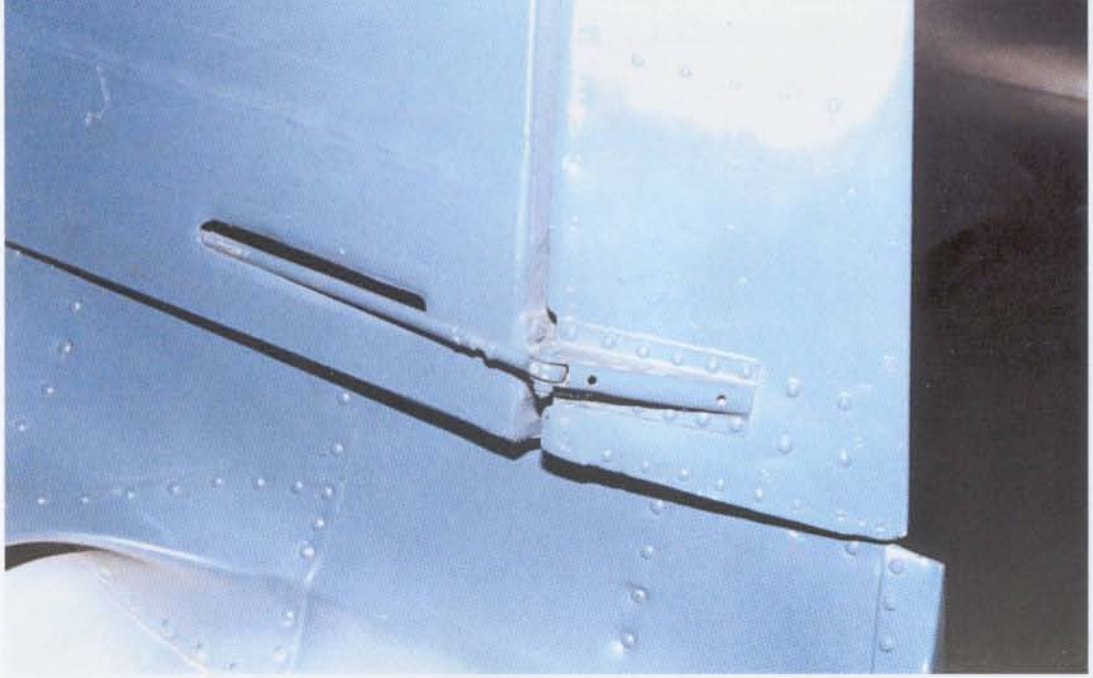
The bomb displacement gear yoke is mounted on the centerline, between the main landing gear wells. Rectangular openings near the gear wells are spent shell and link chutes for the nose-mounted .50 caliber (12.7MM) machine guns. The bomb-aiming window within the displacement gear yoke allowed the pilot to see directly below the aircraft. This measure assisted him in determining the right moment to start his attack. (Owen Miller)

The USAF Museum's A-24 has circumferential tread tires. This type of tread was usually employed for A-24s and SBDs operating from land bases; however, some carrier-based SBDs also used this tread type. Three Dzus fasteners hold the wheel cover in place. This A-24 has Aluminum painted gear struts, while the wheel well is painted the same Neutral Gray as the aircraft's undersurface. (Ed Barthelmes)



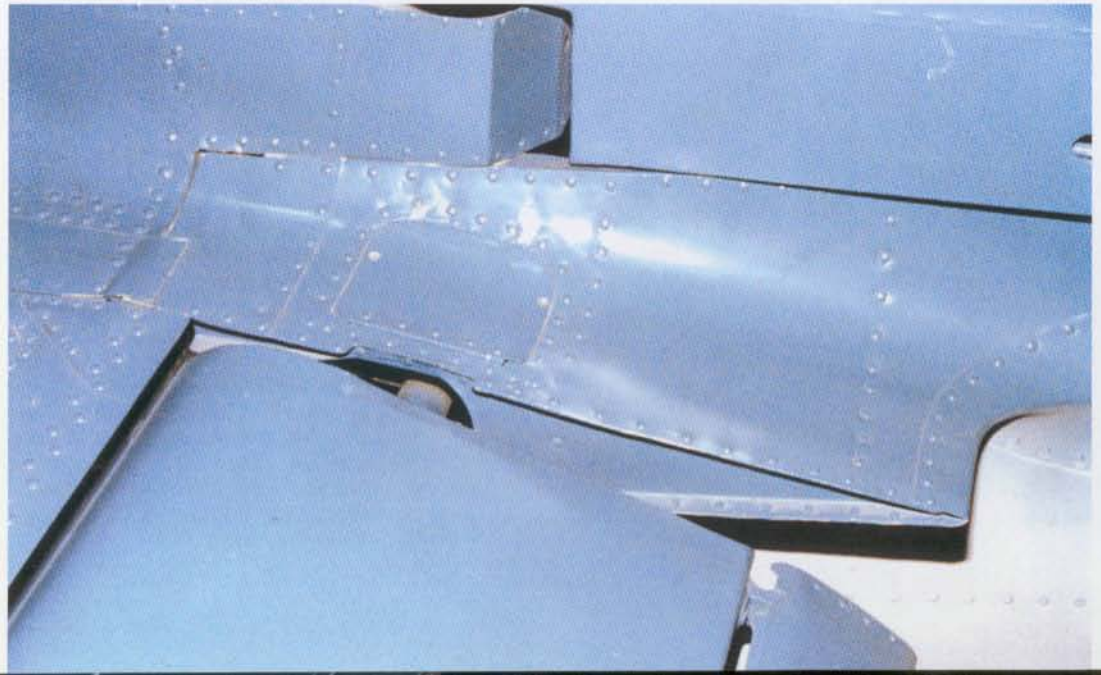
The SBD's rudder consisted of an aluminum structure covered with fabric. It was affixed to the vertical fin by two hinges. The rudder also had an adjustable trim tab mounted on the lower trailing edge. The designation was painted on the rudder, while the Bureau Number (BuNo) appeared under NAVY on the vertical stabilizer. These were painted using one inch (2.5 cm) high letters. (Dann)

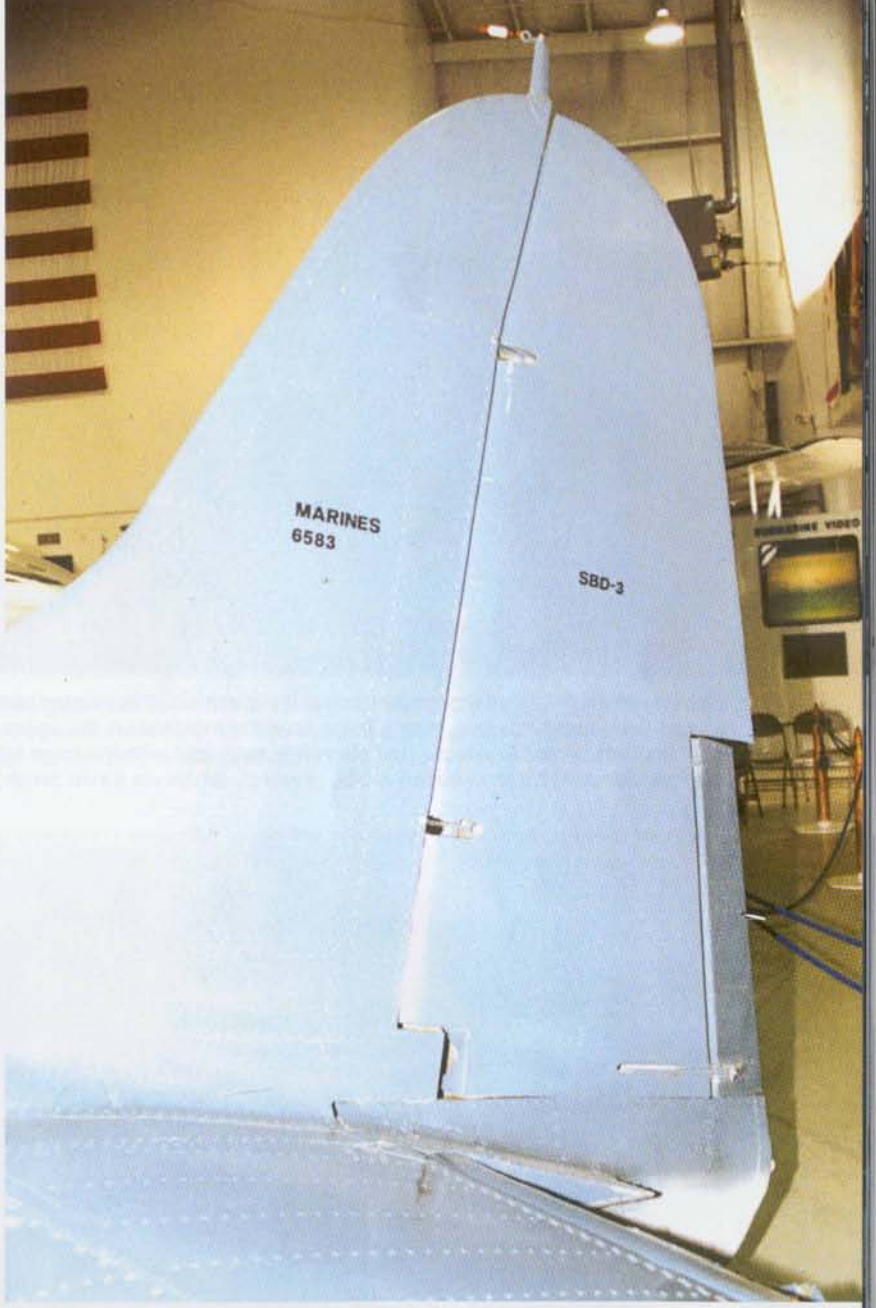
The elevators also employed a fabric-covered aluminum structure. These surfaces were doped in the same color as the paint covering the nearby metal surfaces. SBD elevators were interchangeable from port to starboard. The trim tab linkage for the starboard elevator is located on the upper surface, while the linkage for the port elevator is placed on the lower surface. (Dann)



The Dauntless was equipped with a rudder trim tab. This tab was activated via a push rod that exited through a small opening in the fabric on the rudder's left side. The pilot's trim control was located on the port console in the cockpit. (Owen Miller)

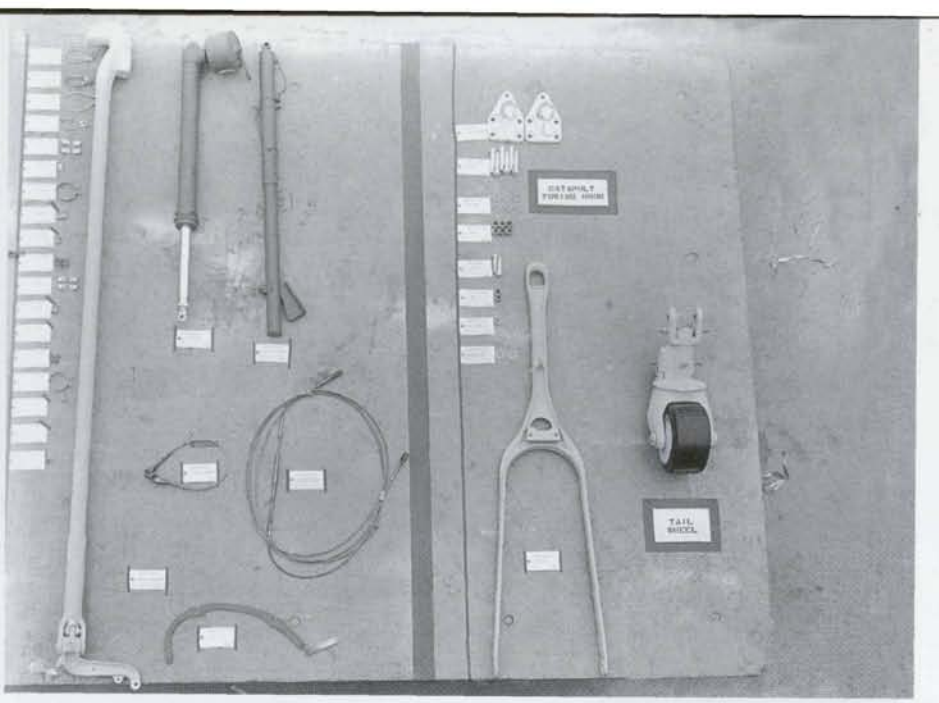
Two elevator trim tabs – one on each elevator – were standard on the SBD/A-24. They were controlled using a trim tab wheel mounted in the cockpit. A torque tube penetrating the fuselage fillet was attached to the other elevator to ensure that they moved in unison. Access panels allowed for maintenance of these items. (Owen Miller)





The vertical stabilizer (fin) was an integral part of the fuselage assembly. The short mast atop this fin held the aft end of the wire radio antenna, which stretched from the antenna mast on the forward fuselage. The basic shape of this fin and the rudder was developed during XBT-2 prototype testing in the late 1930s. This shape did not change throughout the service life of the Dauntless/Banshee series. (Owen Miller)

A factory-fresh A-24 Banshee makes a test flight in 1941. It is painted in its Olive Drab and Neutral Gray paint scheme, with a large national insignia on the upper port wing and a small insignia on the fuselage. This aircraft is equipped with the large inflatable tail wheel that was standard on land-based A-24s. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)



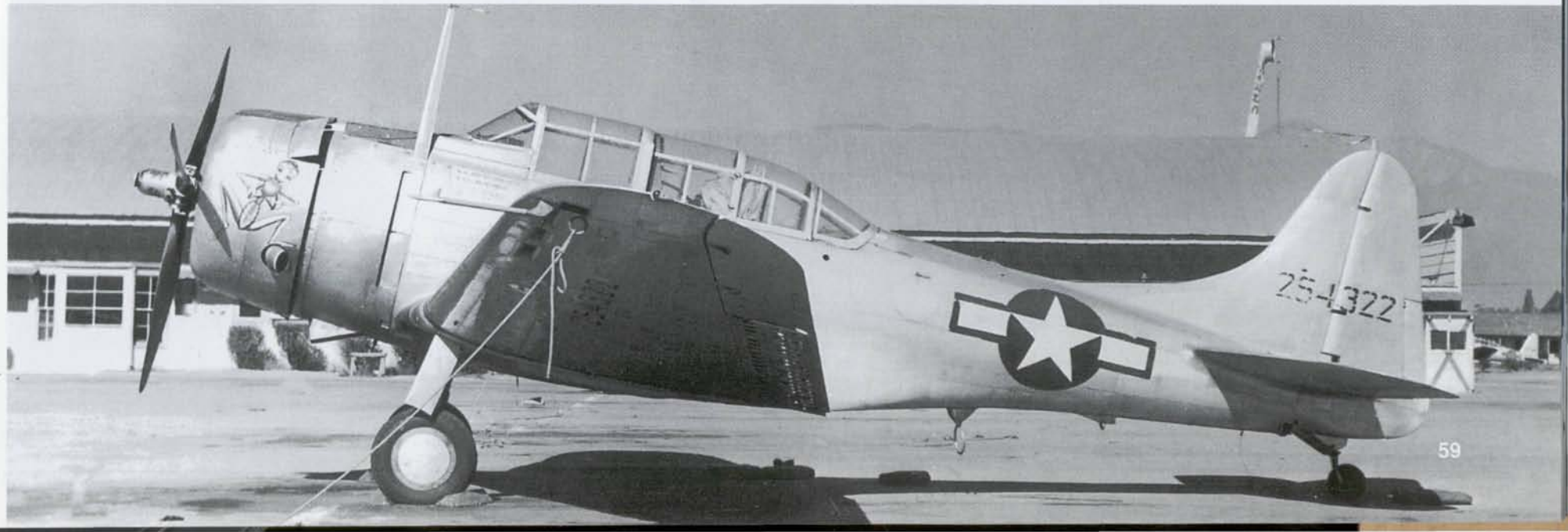
The required parts for converting a US Army A-24 into a US Navy SBD-3 are laid out. The tail hook and its associated hardware are displayed to the left, with the tail wheel, hold-back yoke, and catapult towing hooks placed to the right. Additionally, some A-24s had different throttle quadrants. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

A well-worn A-24A (42-6753) sits awaiting its disposition. It is secured to the ground by ropes tied to tie-down hooks on the wingtips and lower fuselage. The primary recognition feature of the A-24A – equivalent to the SBD-4 Dauntless – was the Hamilton Standard Hydromatic propeller. The bomb displacement gear has been removed from this Banshee. It also appears that the left aileron was re-covered, but not repainted in camouflage color. The tail number 26753 is NS Orange-Yellow (FS33538). (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

An A-24B (392/42-54676) shares the ramp with a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, a Curtiss A-25 Shrike (behind the P-47), and several Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. (The A-25 was the Army's version of the SB2C Helldiver.) The Insignia Blue-bordered national insignia suggests this photo was taken after August of 1943, when this insignia became effective.

A natural metal A-24B (42-54322) is tied down at a US Army airfield during World War Two. It has insect nose art painted on the cowling. This aircraft displays the A-24's typical recognition features: the inflatable tail wheel and the lack of a tail hook. A Direction Finding (DF) loop antenna is mounted under the fuselage. The aircraft's serial number is repeated on the port wing undersurface. The cover in the rear cockpit suggests this A-24B was used for instrument flight training. (SDAM)

Bomb displacement gear has been removed from this A-24B and the belly fairing is in place. The aircraft sports a white fin tip and forward cowling band. Its serial number is painted NS Orange-Yellow on the tail. (SDAM)



An overall NS Light Gray (FS36440) SBD-3 banks to port during 1941. This camouflage scheme was authorized on 30 December 1940 and replaced the colorful US Navy and Marine color schemes of the 1920s and 1930s. The national insignia is painted in four places: aft fuselage sides, lower starboard wing and (not seen here) upper port wing. (Tailhook Association)

An armorer loads .30 caliber (7.62MM) ammunition into an SBD's twin flexible mount machine guns prior to a training flight in the fall of 1943. Both the air deflectors along the aft edge of the pilot's canopy and the secondary gun tunnel doors are open. The flare ejection orifice is on the fuselage side, just below the man's right elbow. (Tailhook Association)

An SBD-5 carrying a white painted 1000 pound (454 KG) bomb makes a test flight. It is painted in the three-tone mid-war scheme of Semi-Gloss Sea Blue, NS Intermediate Blue, and NS Insignia White. This Dauntless has Yagi radar antennas mounted under the wings and a non-standard antenna mast atop the aft fuselage. The tail hook has been removed and a large inflatable tail wheel is installed. (Tailhook)

Armorers check the .30 caliber rear guns of this SBD-3 (8) prior to a mission in November of 1942. The Orange-Yellow ring painted around the fuselage national insignia identified aircraft deployed for Operation TORCH, the Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa that month. Three squadrons of SBD-3s supported TORCH: Scouting Squadron Forty One (VS-41) from the carrier USS RANGER (CV-4), Auxiliary Scouting Squadron Twenty Six (VGS-26) from the escort carrier USS SANGAMON (ACV-26), and VGS-29 from USS SANTEE (ACV-29). (Tailhook Association)

This unusually painted SBD-6 (315) was photographed at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania during 1944. The Dauntless appears to have Glossy Sea Blue (FS15042) upper surfaces and NS Light Gray (FS36440) undersurfaces. Additionally, the vertical tail is painted in a light color. Wheel covers have been removed from this aircraft. (Larry Webster Collection via Sullivan)

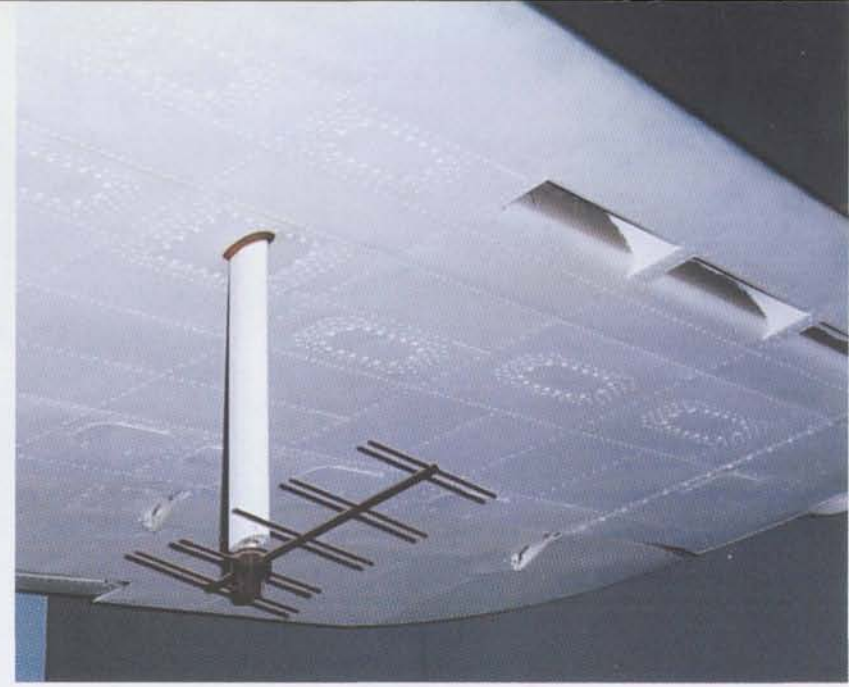
This sad view shows a number of Marine Air Group Twenty Four (MAG-24) SBD-6s being scrapped at Malaban, Mindanao, the Philippines on 24 July 1945. Everything forward of the firewall was removed. The nearest Dauntless (713) is named QUEENIE and has 114 mission tallies painted on the forward fuselage. (USMC via Sullivan)

This unusual photo shows an SBD with what appears to be eight rocket rails just outboard of the wing mounted bomb racks. It is believed these rails were used for testing 5 inch (12.7 cm) High Velocity Air Rockets (HVARs). No further information is known about this configuration. (NMNA)

Another rarely seen weapons load were these two DGP-1 twin .50 caliber (12.7mm) gun pods. Yagi Air-to-Surface Type B (ASB) radar antennas are mounted further out on the wings. These antennas were common on SBD-5s and -6s. (NMNA)

An armorer loads .50 caliber ammunition for an SBD's port forward machine gun. This scene occurred during the Battle of the Coral Sea on 6 May 1942. The next day, Dauntlesses from the carriers LEXINGTON (CV-2) and YORKTOWN (CV-5) sank the Japanese light carrier SHOHO. Black non-skid material was applied to the wing root walkways. (NMNA)

Armorers prepare to load a 1000 pound (454 KG) General Purpose (GP) bomb aboard an SBD-5 (16) prior to a 1944 mission. The weapon was hoisted from a cart onto the centerline bomb rack. The bomb displacement gear yoke is then fitted to the bomb. This Dauntless has block tread pattern tires normally used on land-based aircraft. (Harry Gann via NMNA)



(Above) Westinghouse Yagi Air-to-Surface Type B (ASB) radar antennas were mounted under the wings of SBD-5 and SBD-6 aircraft. This antenna is located on the port wing undersurface. Five dipoles are mounted on the ray assembly, which was fitted to the bottom of the antenna strut. The array assembly swiveled to any angle by hydraulic control. This control came through the display unit in the aft cockpit. The ASB radar enabled Dauntless crews to attack surface targets at night or in bad weather. (Jim McLaughlin)

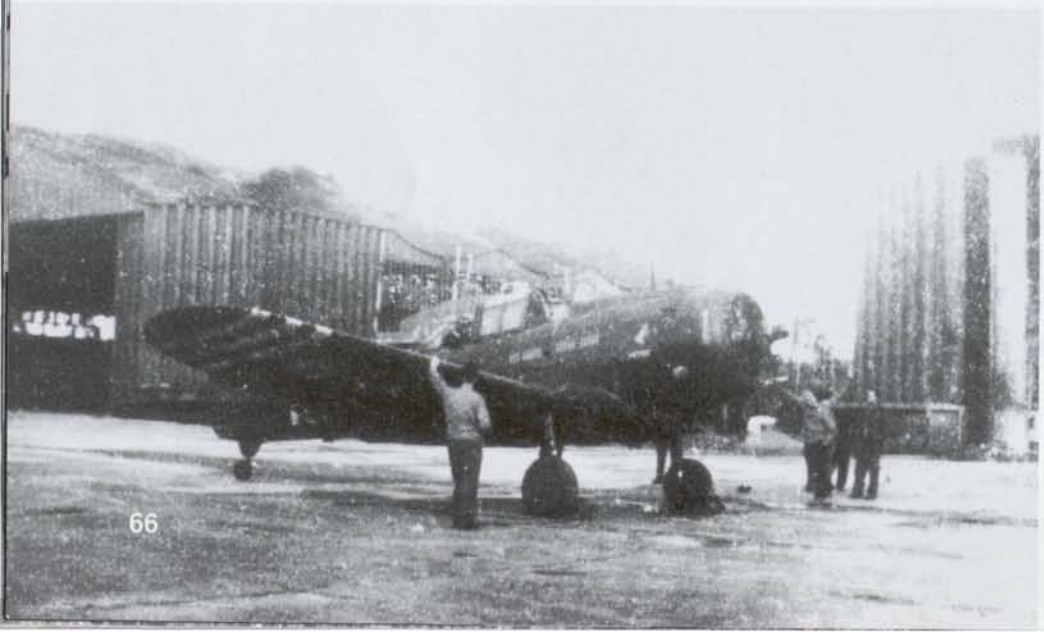
(Left) A Yagi ASB radar antenna is mounted under an SBD-5's starboard wing. Its mast enters the wing surface through the national insignia painted there. This antenna is identical to the one located under the port wing. The five dipoles on each antenna were mounted at 90° to the ray assembly, which was located 40° outboard on the antenna mast. The Yagi ASB radar was commonly fitted to both SBD-5s and -6s. (Jim McLaughlin)

(Above) The ASB display unit was mounted on the forward decking of the aft cockpit and was operated by the radio operator/gunner. Returns from the antennas were displayed on the green screen, which is overlaid with white reference marks. Screen adjustment controls are mounted along the right edge of the unit, above the power unit cord socket. Immediately left of this socket are the antenna controls, which are turned to swivel the antennas. The Yagi ASB was able to detect a battleship at a range of 40 miles (64 KM) and a submarine at five miles (8 KM). (Jim McLaughlin)

(Right) This Yagi ASB antenna is removed from an aircraft for museum display. An aerodynamic strut surrounded the antenna mount. This strut is painted to match the aircraft undersurface color, while the ray assembly and dipoles are left in natural copper. Yagi was also common on the Grumman TBF/General Motors TBM Avenger torpedo-bomber and the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver scout/dive-bomber. (Jim McLaughlin)

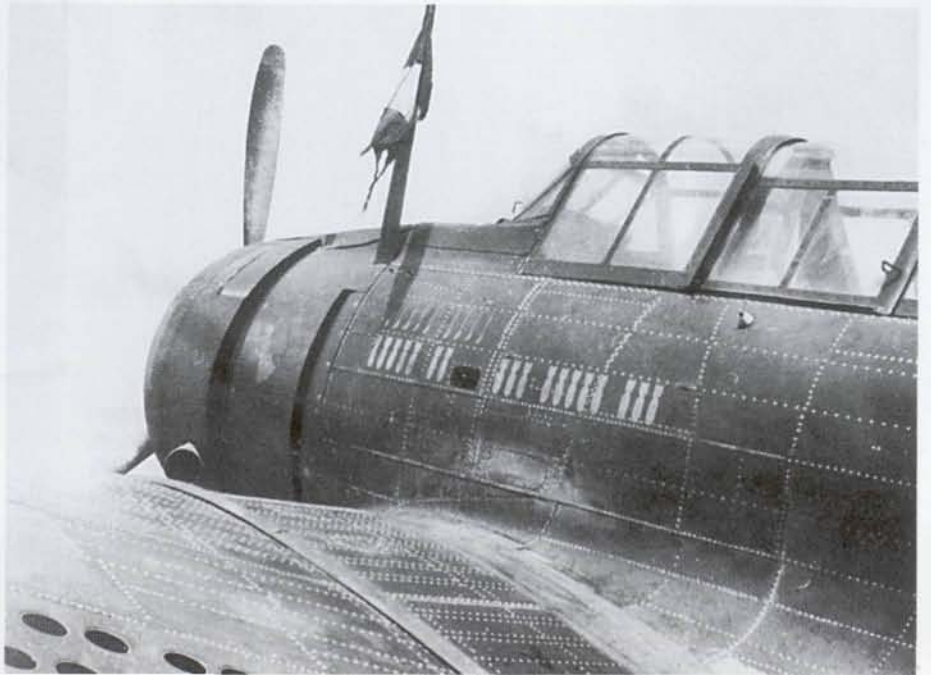
The US delivered 50 A-24Bs to France's *Armee de l'Air* (Air Force) in 1943. These Banshees were originally delivered to the Free French in Morocco before they saw action on the African continent, the Middle East, and Continental Europe. A French pilot stands by his A-24B (1), which has the insignia of *Groupe de Bombardement* (Bombardment Group) I/18 *'Vendee'* painted on the forward fuselage. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

Black and white 'invasion stripes' are painted on the wings of this GB I/18 *'Vendee'* A-24B (1). These recognition markings were applied for the Allied invasion of southern France (Operation ANVIL-DRAGOON) in August of 1944. GB I/18 deployed to Toulouse, France, from where their Banshees attacked isolated German positions along the French Atlantic coast. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)



The *Armee de l'Air* assigned 25 of their 50 A-24Bs to Meknes airfield in Morocco for use as trainers. The rest of the aircraft were split between two operational *escadrilles* (squadrons), GB I/17 *'Picarde'* and GB I/18 *'Vendee.'* GB I/17 primarily flew coastal patrols off Morocco and Algeria during 1943 and 1944. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

Eighteen bomb mission symbols are painted along the fuselage of this GB I/18 *'Vendee'* A-24B. These Banshees were painted in the standard USAAF scheme of Olive Drab upper surfaces and Neutral Gray undersurfaces. The *Armee de l'Air* retired its last A-24B in 1953. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)



While one Dauntless flies overhead, another SBD-5 warms up its engine. The US supplied SBD-5s to the French *Aéronautique Navale* (Naval Aviation) in late 1944. These Dauntlesses retained the large tail wheel commonly seen on land-based aircraft. After World War Two, French SBDs operated from the British-built carriers DIXMUDE (ex-HMS BITER) and ARROMANCHES (ex-HMS COLOSSUS). (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith/Dauntless Aviation)

An *Aéronautique Navale* SBD-5 (141, ex-BuNo 54578) is parked before two destroyed hangars at Cognac, France. The tail hook removed from this aircraft for land operations was reinstalled when carrier-borne operations began. *Flottille* (Flotilla) 4FB flew Dauntlesses in combat during the last five months of World War Two in Europe. The last *Aéronautique Navale* SBD-5s were retired in July of 1949. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith/Dauntless Aviation)

This *Flottille* 4FB SBD-5 (167, ex-BuNo 36730) is fitted with Yagi ASB radar antennas and a practice bomb dispenser on the port wing bomb rack. Sixteen mission markings are painted under the cockpit. *Aéronautique Navale* Dauntlesses were painted in the standard US tricolor paint scheme of Glossy Sea Blue (FS15042), NS Intermediate Blue (FS35164), and NS Insignia White (FS37875). This aircraft's side number was changed to 4.F-7 later in its service life, before it was stricken in March of 1948. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith/Dauntless Aviation)

Dauntlesses were assigned to various utility roles after they were phased out of front-line service from mid-1944. This Santa Ana, California-based SBD-4 (24) was modified for target towing duty. The aircraft appears to be painted Sea Blue on the upper surfaces and Insignia White on the undersurfaces. A canvas cover is fitted over the cowling. (Tailhook)

This rare pre-war color photograph shows a VMB-2 SBD-1 (2-MB-1, BuNo 1597) in flight. This Marine Squadron – the first operational Dauntless unit – was based at NAS North Island, California in 1940. The Navy did not operate SBD-1s at all as front-line aircraft, preferring to wait for the slightly improved SBD-2 in late 1940. (Tailhook)

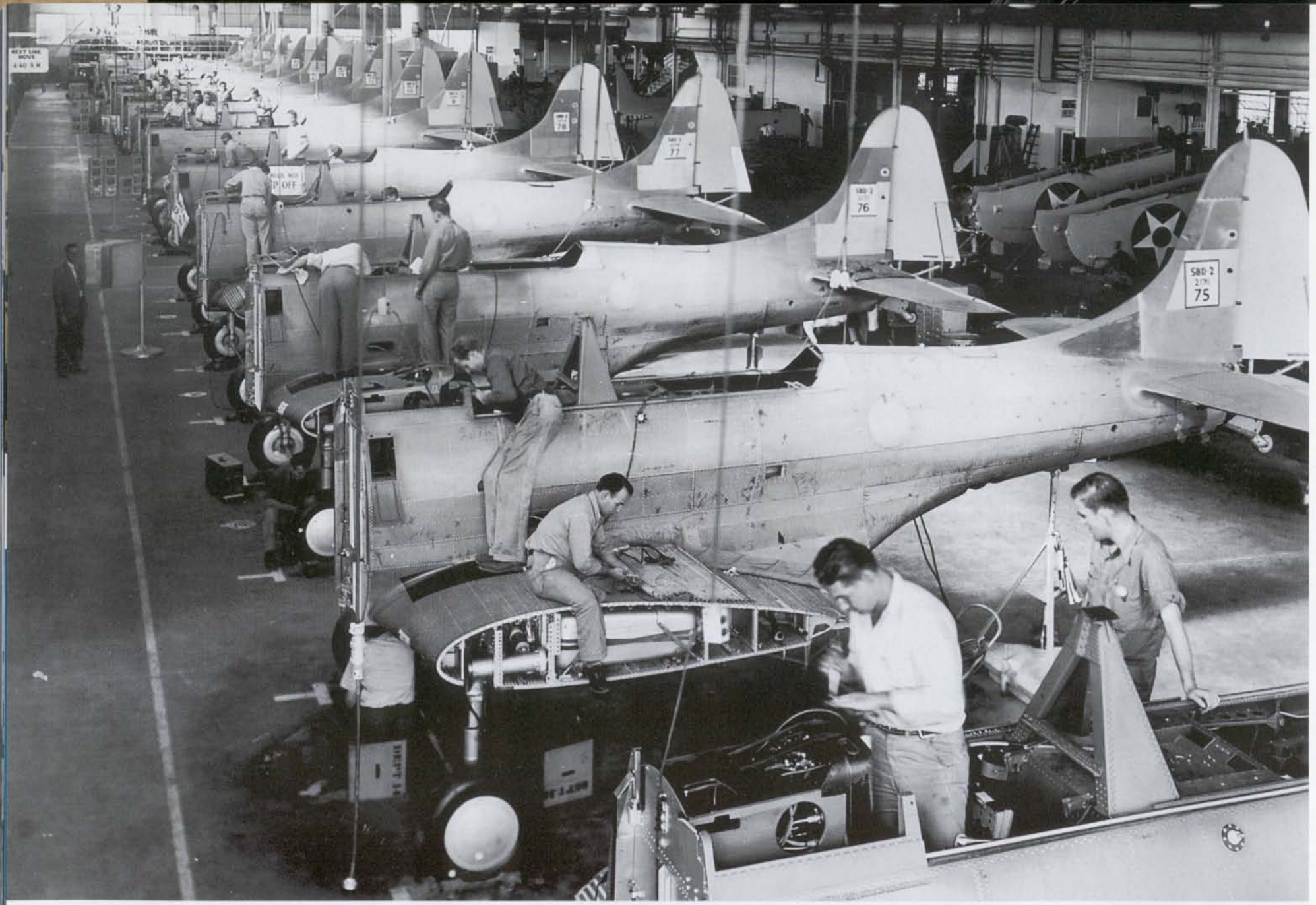
An overall natural metal SBD-5 has lowered its landing gear while at altitude. It was employed for utility duties at a Naval Air Station in the Continental United States (CONUS) late in World War Two. These duties included target towing, weather reconnaissance, and training. It has a pneumatic tail wheel for ground-based operations, but still retains a tail hook. The aircraft has a Flat Black anti-glare panel on the upper fuselage and cowling. An unidentified insignia is painted on the forward fuselage. Fabric-covered control surfaces are doped Aluminum to closely match the natural metal finish. (Tailhook)

The Mexican Air Force (*Fuerza Aérea Mexicana*; FAM) operated 30 A-24Bs from 1943. This aircraft was Ser. No BID-2525, assigned to *Escuadrón Aéreo de Pelea* (Air Combat Squadron) 200. (BID stood for *Bombardero Intermedio Douglas*, or Douglas Medium Bomber). The Banshee is painted overall Olive Drab and has yellow fuselage and wing stripes. Its propeller dome is red and the wheels are in a yellow and black checker pattern. Three yellow stripes are painted on the antenna mast tip. (Santiago Flores)

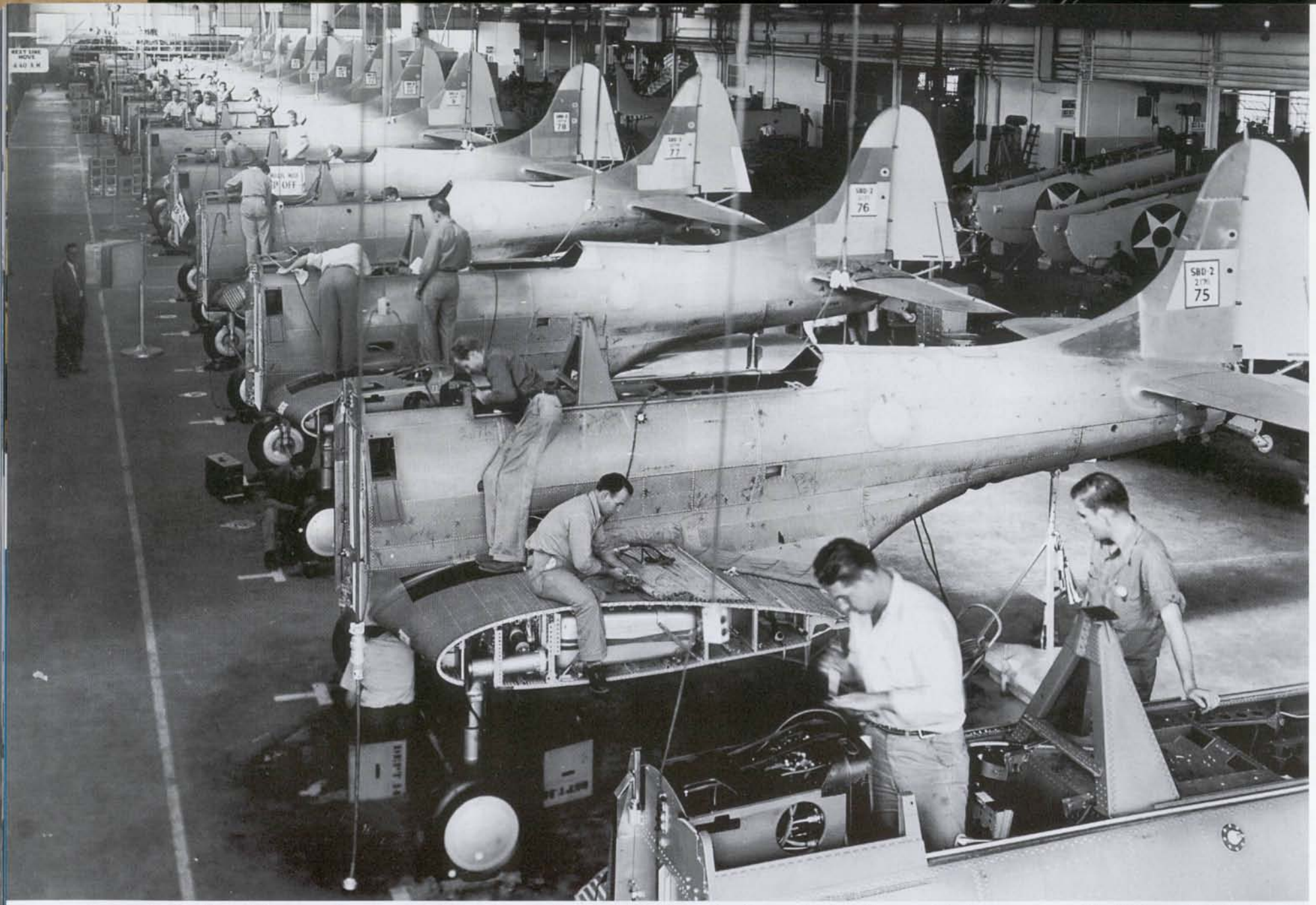
A trio of Scouting Squadron Fifty One (VS-51) SBD-5s fly on anti-submarine patrol off Hawaii during mid-1944. All three aircraft sport Yagi antennas under the wings and a single bomb on the centerline rack. Additionally, these Dauntlesses have large inflatable tail wheels. VS-51 deployed from Hawaii to Tutuila, Samoa that summer. (Tailhook)

Nine Marine Scouting Squadron Three (VMS-3) SBD-5s fly in echelon near St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands during early 1944. They are painted in the Atlantic ASW paint scheme of NS Dark Gull Gray (FS36231) over NS Insignia White (FS37875). VMS-3 flew anti-submarine patrols over the Caribbean Sea until disestablished in the summer of 1944. (Tailhook Association)

Several SBD-3s aboard the second carrier USS YORKTOWN (CV-10) are prepared for flight sometime in early 1943. The auxiliary door for the rear gun stowage is opened, while the rearmost canopy section is closed. An inertial starter handle is mounted on the accessory cowling. Two deck crewman are working beside the open baggage area of the near Dauntless. (Tailhook)



At least 14 Dauntless airframes are in advanced stages of production at Douglas' El Segundo, California production line in early 1941. The five nearest airframes are SBD-2s, followed by three SBD-3s, then six more SBD-2s in the rear. Signs taped to the vertical stabilizers indicate the SBD variant, its Navy Bureau Number (BuNo), and its Douglas construction number. Double rows of rivets secure many of the SBD's panels to the framing. This sturdy construction resulted in a robust aircraft that absorbed heavy battle damage, yet was able to bring its crew back to its carrier or shore base. (NMNA)



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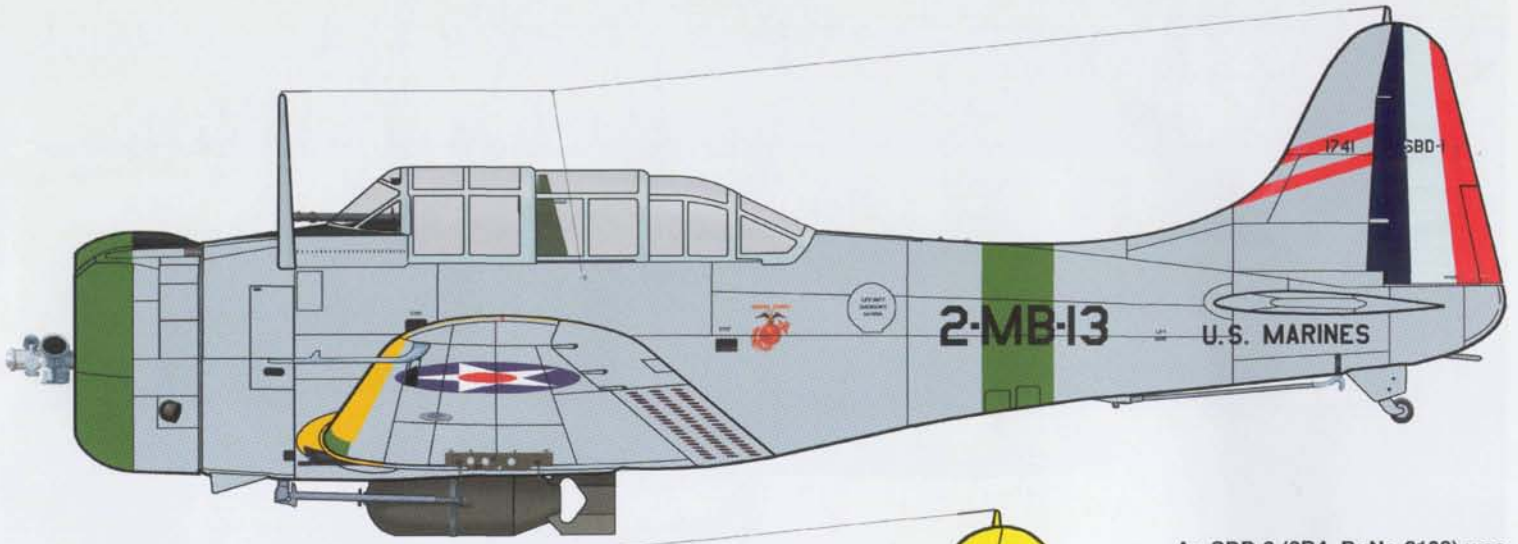
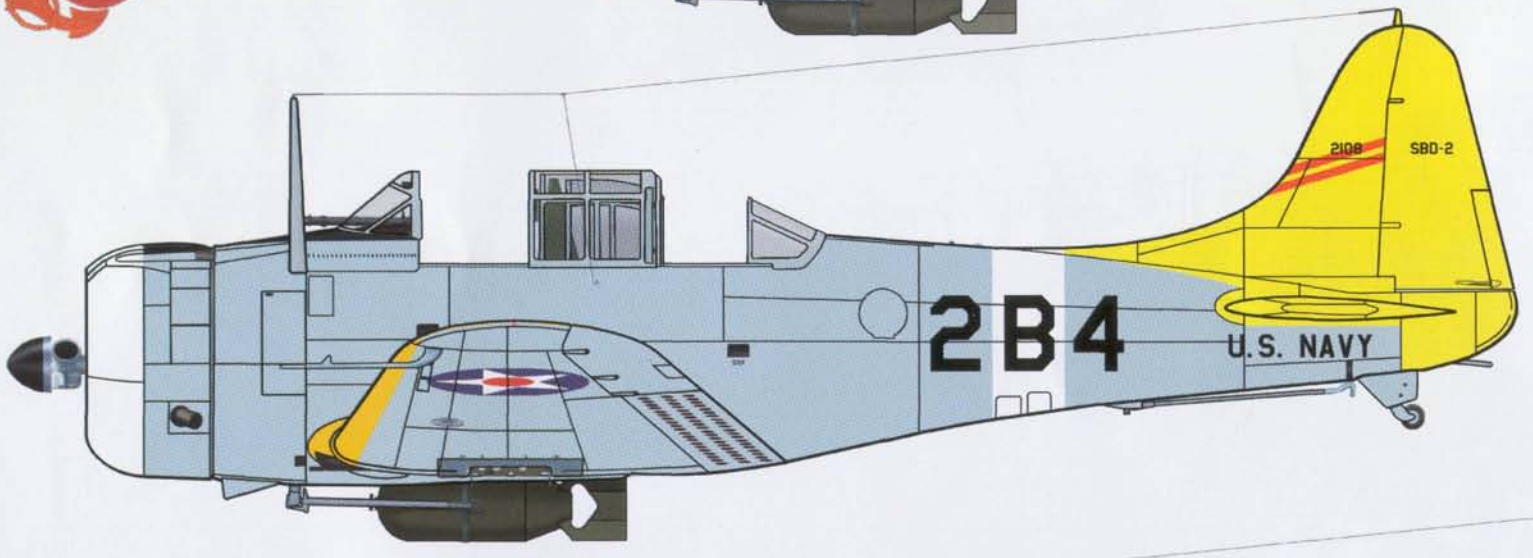
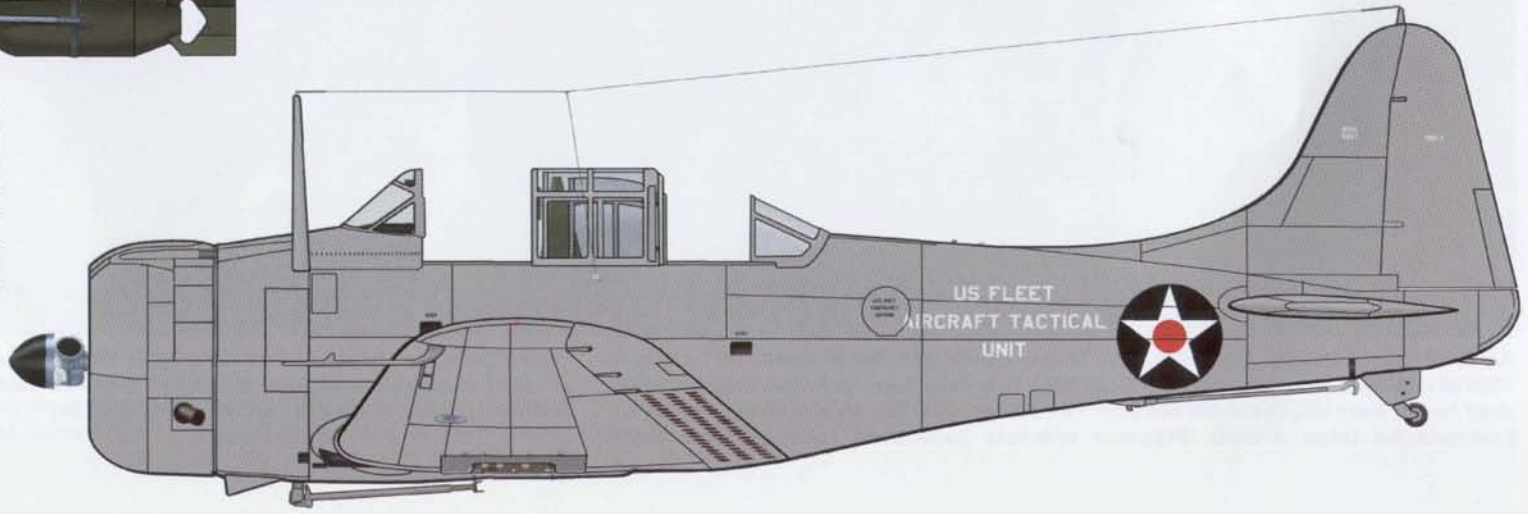
This SBD-1 Dauntless (2-MB-13, BuNo 1741) was assigned to Marine Bombing Squadron Two (VMB-2) at Quantico, Virginia in 1940. The aircraft is painted in the markings of the fifth section leader, with Willow Green (FS14187) cowling and fuselage bands.

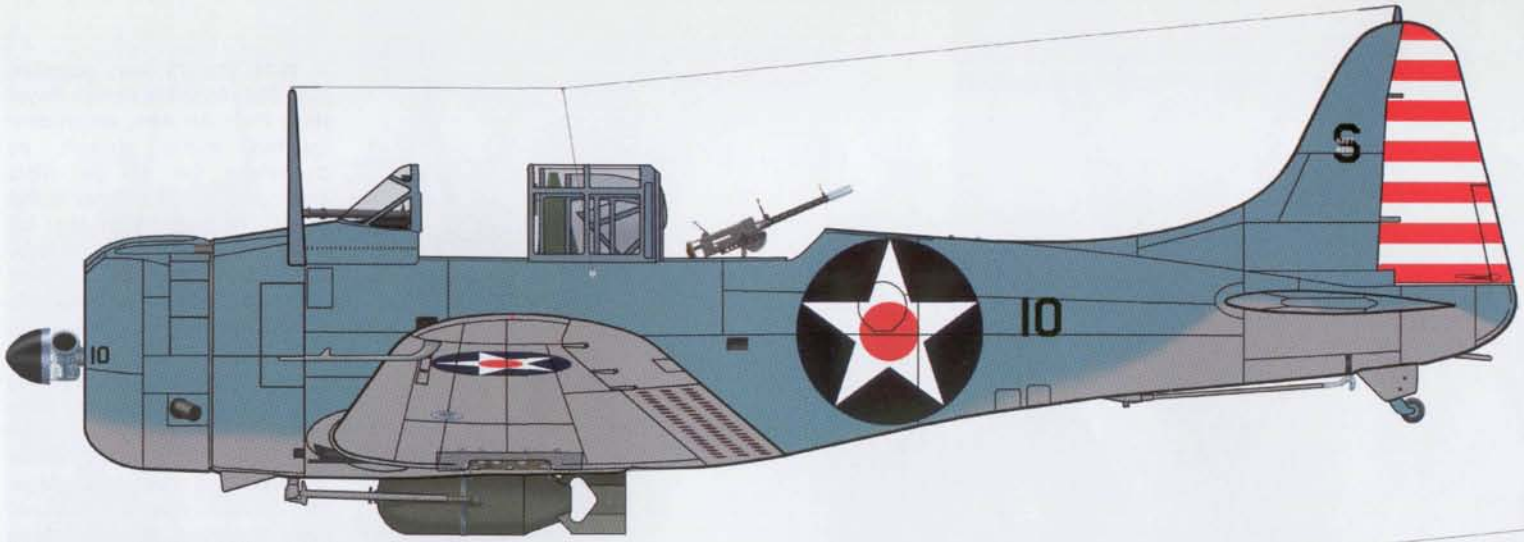




An SBD-2 (2B4, BuNo 2108) was one of only a handful that received colorful pre-war markings. Glossy Insignia White (FS17875) Second Section markings are painted on this VB-2 aircraft. The Lemon Yellow (FS13655) tail indicated VB-2's assignment to the aircraft carrier USS LEXINGTON (CV-2).

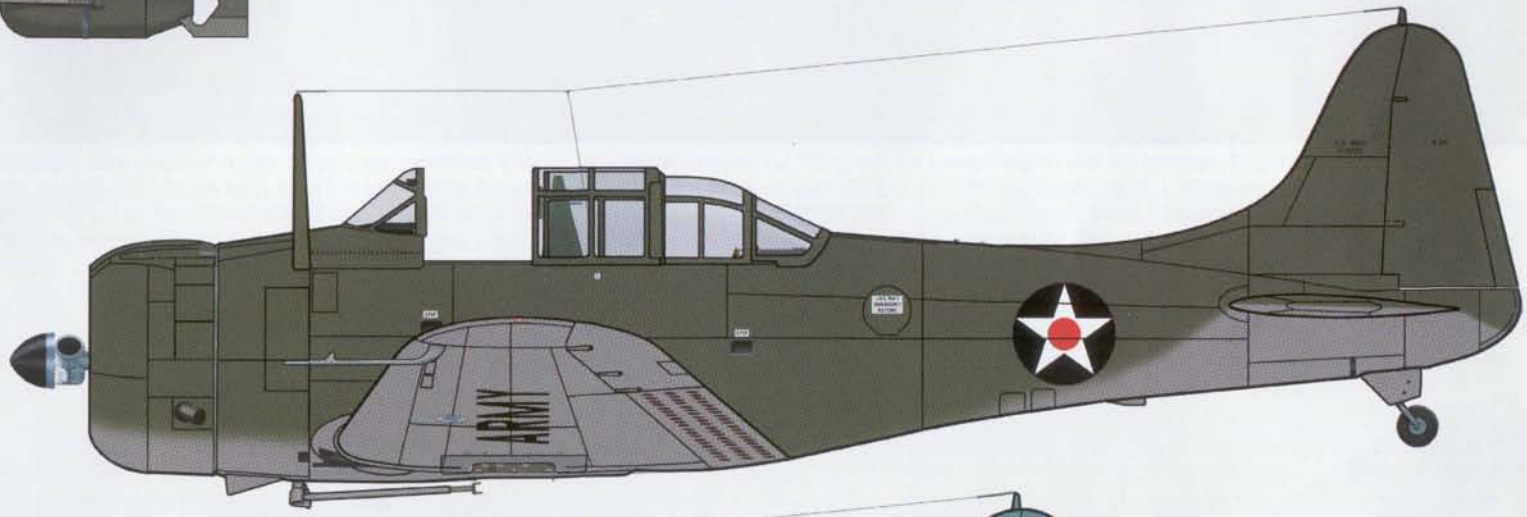
This SBD-3 was used by the US Fleet Aircraft Tactical Unit in early to late 1941. This tactical evaluation unit reported to the Commander Aircraft, Battle Force. It is painted overall Non-Specular (NS) Light Gray (FS36440), with NS Insignia White (FS37875) markings.

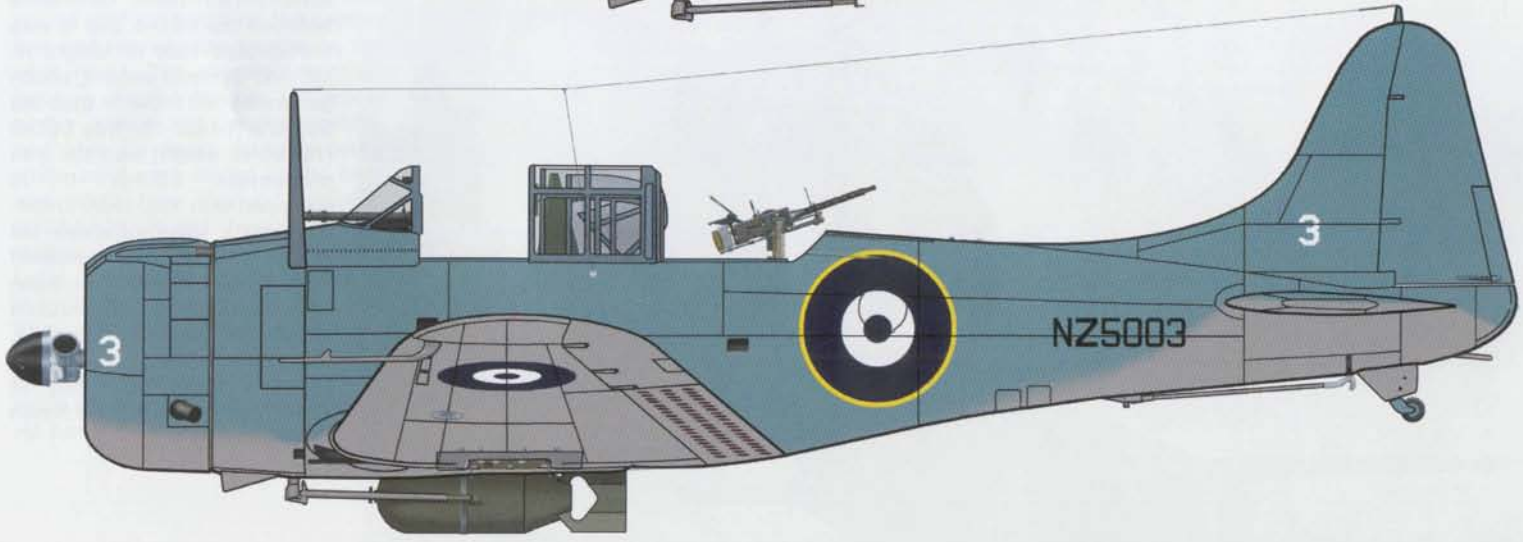




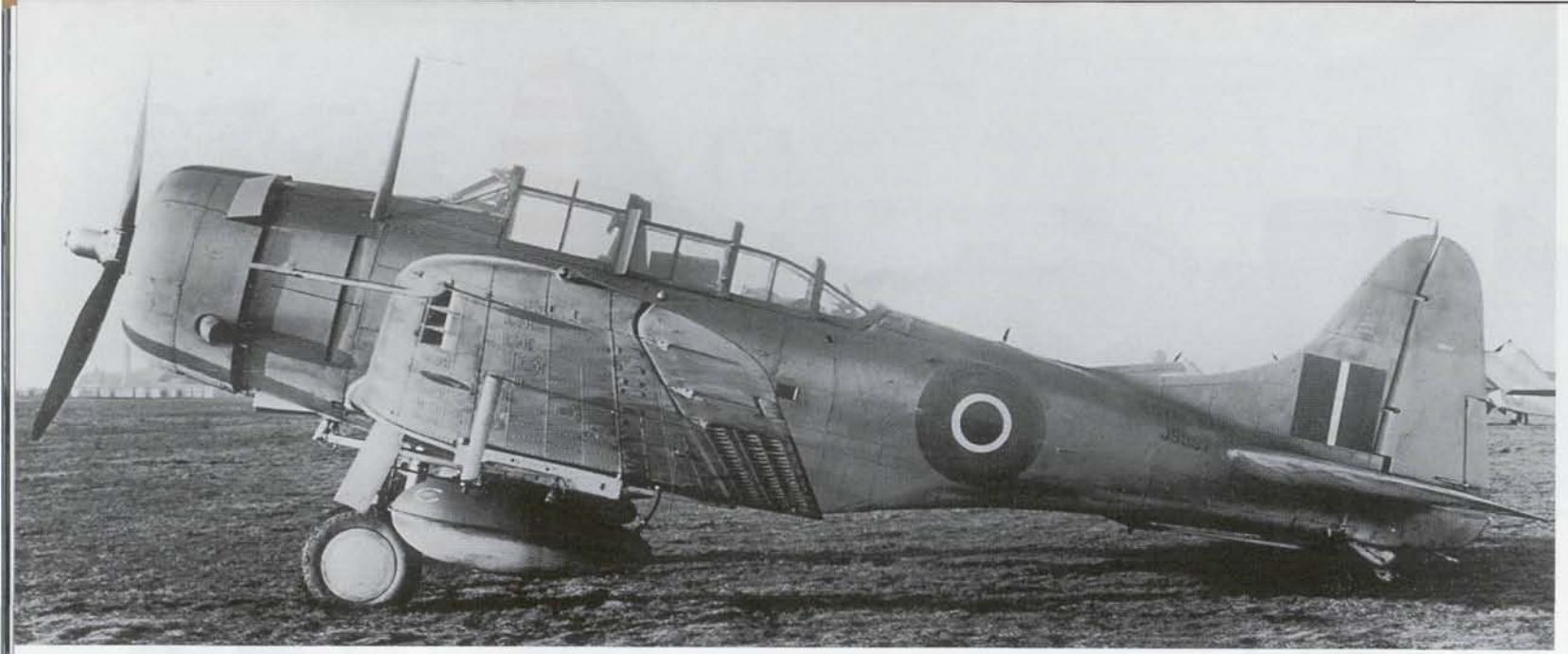
LTJG Stanley Vejtasa and Radioman 3c Frank Wood crewed this SBD-3 (S-10, BuNo 4690) during the Battle of the Coral Sea on 4-8 May 1942. It was assigned to Scouting Squadron Five (VS-5) aboard USS YORKTOWN (CV-5).

Douglas built 168 A-24 Banshees for the US Army Air Forces, including 41-15755. This aircraft was equivalent to the Navy's SBD-3, but deleted the tail hook and used a pneumatic tail wheel. A-24s saw combat over Java in early 1942. U.S ARMY is painted under the wings.





No 25 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force flew nine SBD-3s – including 3/NZ5003 – from Seagrove, New Zealand from July of 1943. This Squadron deployed to Bougainville for combat operations in 1944.



In 1944, the US Navy supplied nine SBD-5s to the British Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm, which designated these aircraft as Dauntless DB Mk Is. This Dauntless I (JT997, ex-BuNo 36022) is painted in the US Navy's mid-war scheme of Non-Specular (NS) Sea Blue (FS35042), (NS) Intermediate Blue (FS35164), and NS Insignia White (FS37875). This aircraft is equipped with two 58 US gallon (220 L) drop tanks on the wing bomb racks. Yagi ASB radar antennas are installed under the port and starboard wings. The British roundel has not been painted on the wing undersurface, but a roundel is painted on the fuselage side and a fin flash is on the vertical stabilizer. The British evaluated the Dauntless, but did not accept it for operational service. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

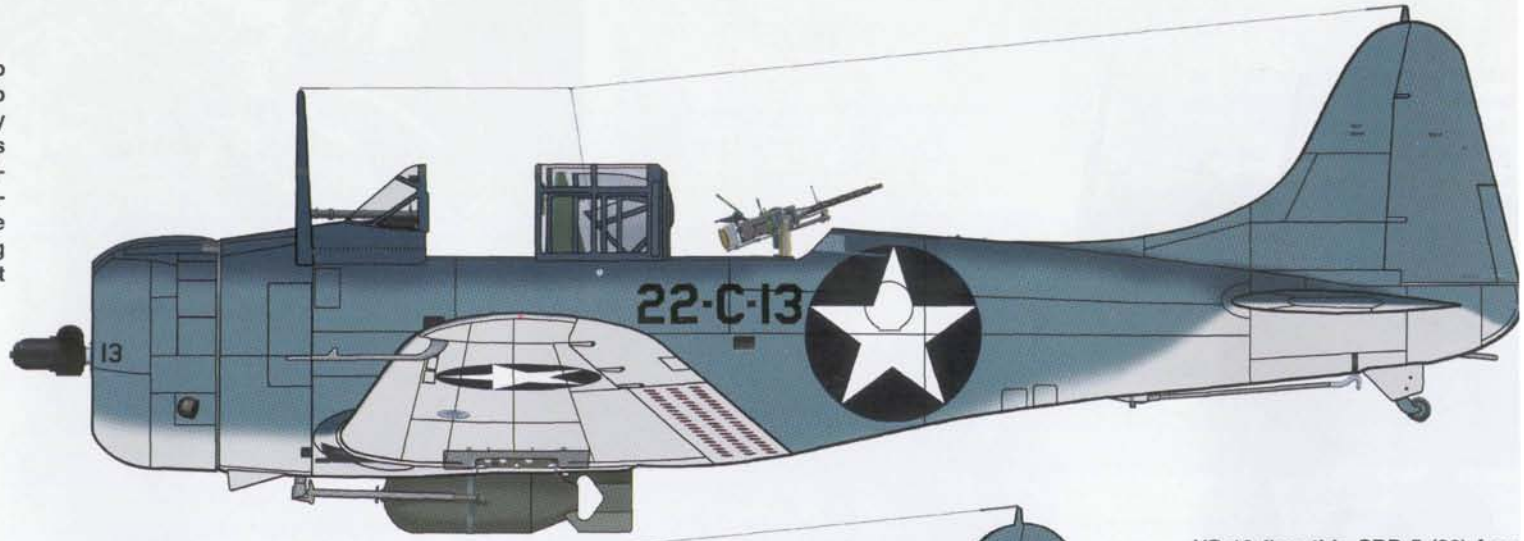
The SBD-6 was the final production variant of the Dauntless series. The main difference between the SBD-5 and -6 was the uprated 1350 HP Wright R-1820-66 Cyclone engine, which generated 150 more HP than the SBD-5's R-1820-60. This SBD-6 (15, BuNo 54605) was the fifth production SBD-6. It is equipped with Yagi radar antennas and a large inflatable tail wheel. The US Navy ordered 1450 SBD-6s in mid-1943; however, this contract was reduced to 450 in February of 1944. Douglas completed the SBD-6s between March and July of 1944. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

The Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) was another major Dauntless operator. The RNZAF received 18 SBD-3s, 27 SBD-4s, and 23 SBD-5s on loan from the US Marine Corps (USMC). A mix of SBD-3s and -4s are lined up at Seagrove, New Zealand, including an SBD-4 (26, NZ5026/ex-BuNo 10599) second from the front and an SBD-3 behind it. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

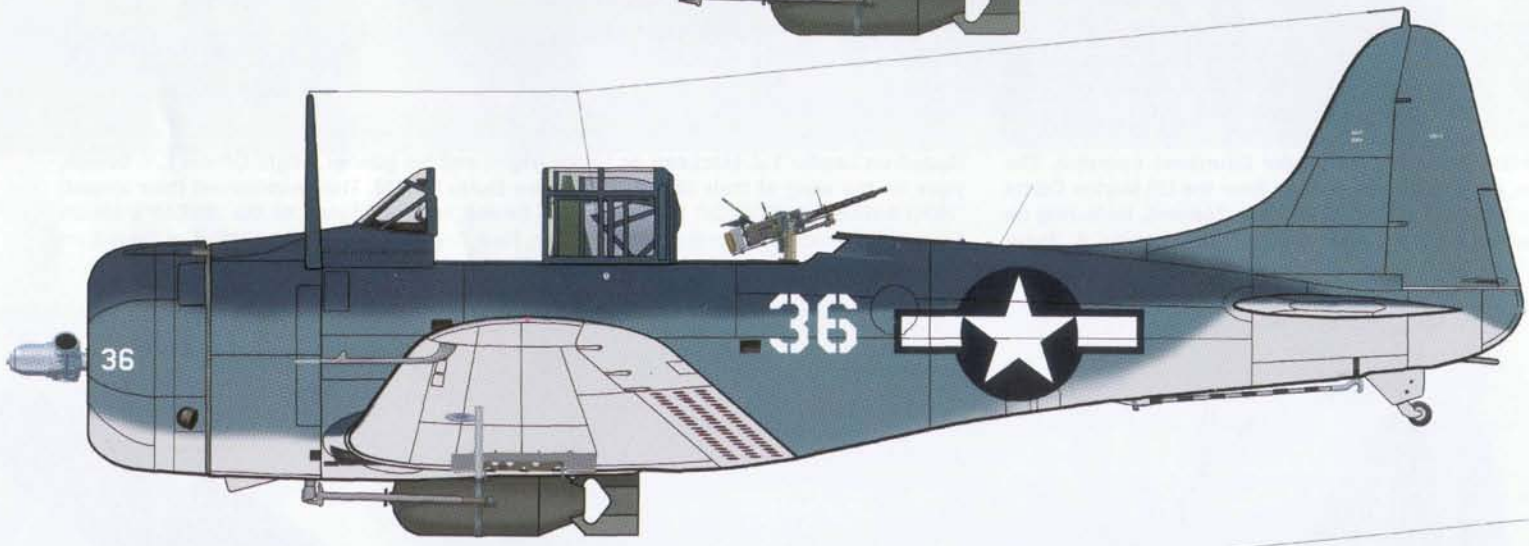
Squadron Leader T.J. MacLean de Lange (right) and his gunner, Flight Officer L.T. Sewell, pose on the wing of their SBD-5 (NZ5057/ex-BuNo 36925). They nicknamed their aircraft "HOWA-BAHT-THAT-HIC." De Lange and Sewell were assigned to the RNZAF's No 25 Squadron, which was formed at Seagrove, New Zealand on 31 July 1943. The Squadron emblem is painted near the accessory cooling vent. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

WINNIE PUH III (49, NZ5049/ex-BuNo 36897) was an SBD-5 assigned to Flight Lieutenant T.R.F. Johnson and his gunner, Flight Sergeant R.J. Howell. This aircraft is equipped with Yagi radar and carries a 500 pound (227 KG) bomb on the center-line and two smaller bombs on the wing racks. The aircraft has a tail hook, a large inflatable tail wheel and a unique red (leading), white, and blue fin flash. Blue bordered white bars were added to the blue and white New Zealand roundel. RNZAF SBD-3s and -4s were painted standard Blue Gray (FS35189) over Light Gull Gray (FS36440), while their SBD-5s were painted Dark Sea Blue over Intermediate Blue over Insignia White. No 25 Squadron flew SBD-5s in combat from Bougainville in the spring of 1944. (Peter C. Smith via Kevin Smith)

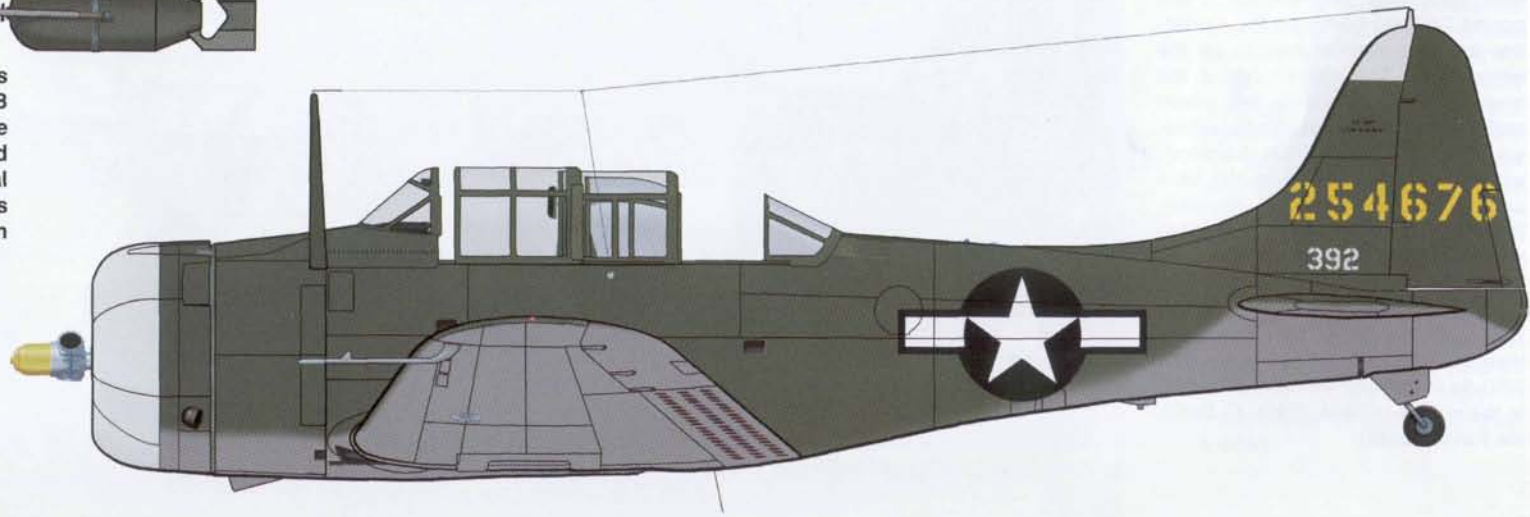
This SBD-4 (22-C-13, BuNo 06947) was assigned to Composite Squadron Twenty Two (VC-22). The unit was embarked aboard the light carrier USS INDEPENDENCE (CVL-22) in May of 1943. The Dauntless' lack of wing folding limited its career aboard light and escort carriers.

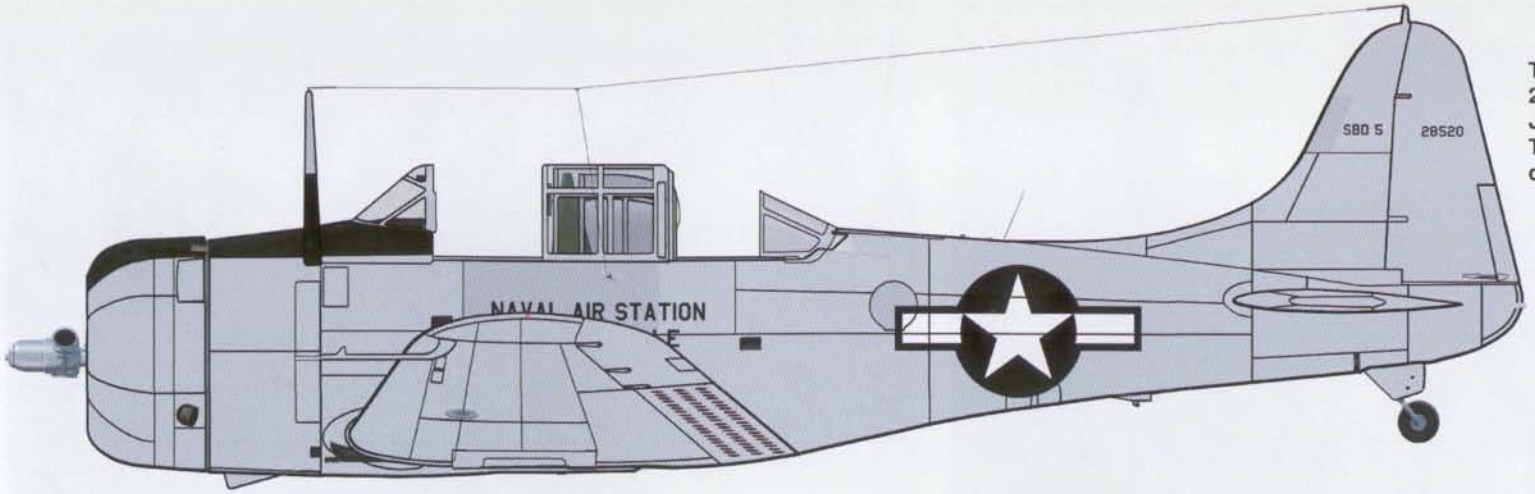


VB-10 flew this SBD-5 (36) from USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6). It participated in US air strikes against Palau on 29-30 March 1944.



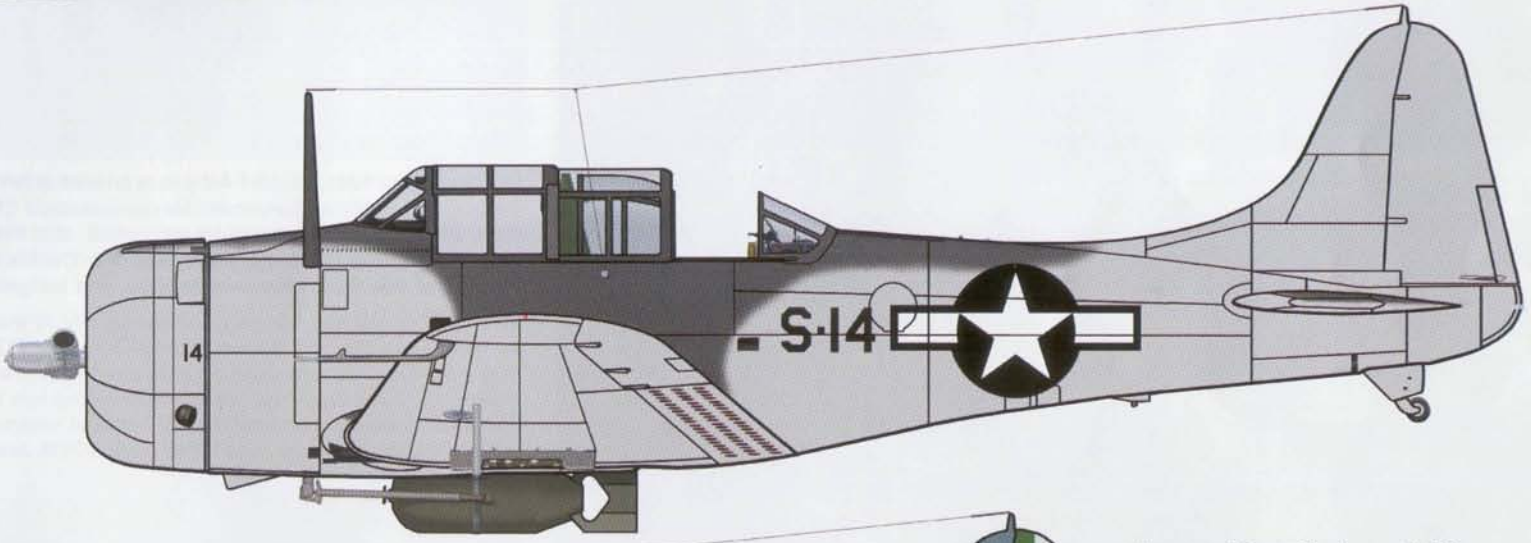
A white cowl band and fin trim is painted on this USAAF A-24B (392, 42-54676). This Banshee was one of 615 A-24Bs delivered by Douglas out of an original order for 1200. USAAF A-24Bs primarily saw utility service in the United States.

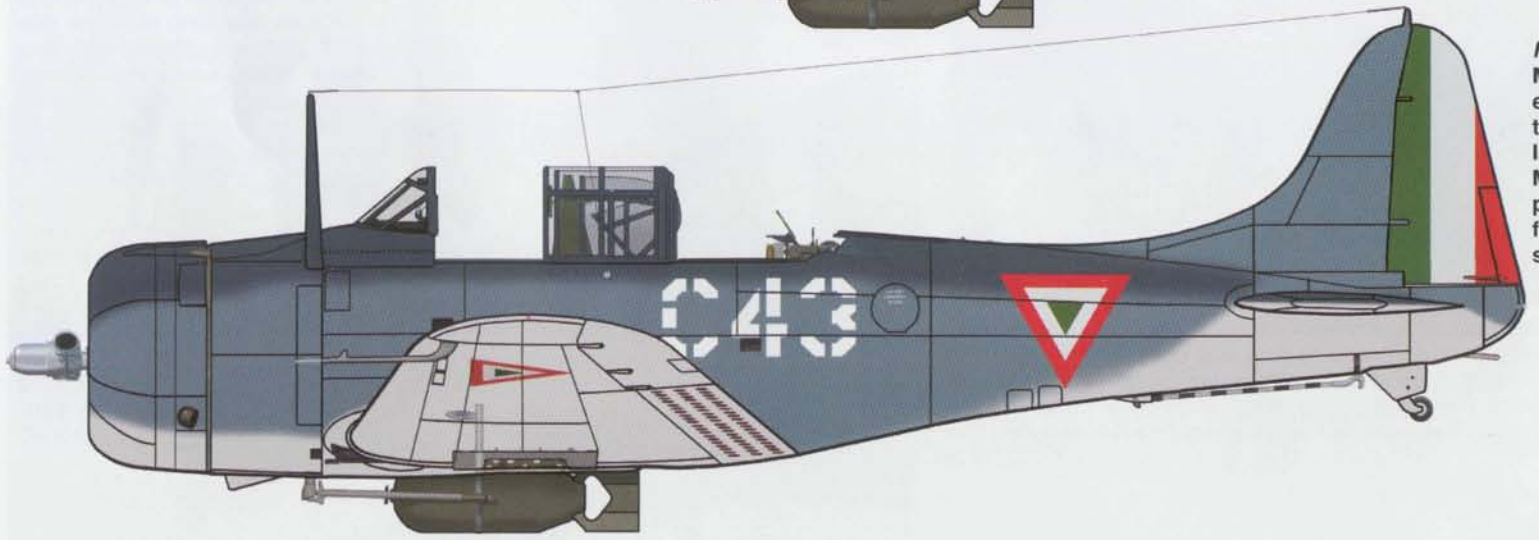




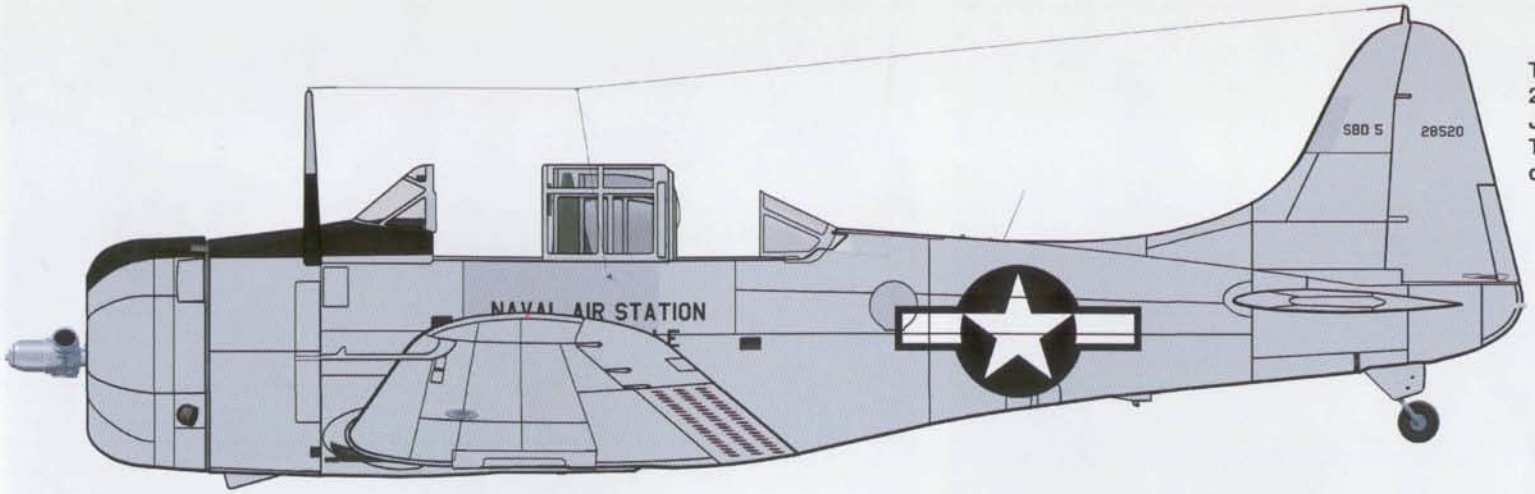
This natural metal SBD-5 (BuNo 28520) was assigned to NAS Jacksonville, Florida in 1944. This aircraft performed utility duties at the station.

This SBD-5 (S-14) was assigned to a Atlantic Fleet Scouting Squadron in 1944. It is painted in the ASW Scheme II of Non-Specular (NS) Dark Gull Gray (FS36231), NS Insignia White (FS37875), and Glossy Insignia White (FS17875).





Fuerza Aérea Mexicana (FAM; Mexican Air Force) pilots used eight SBD-5s, including C43, for tactical training at NAS North Island, California in early 1944. Mexican national insignia were painted on all four wing and two fuselage positions, with rudder striping in the national colors.



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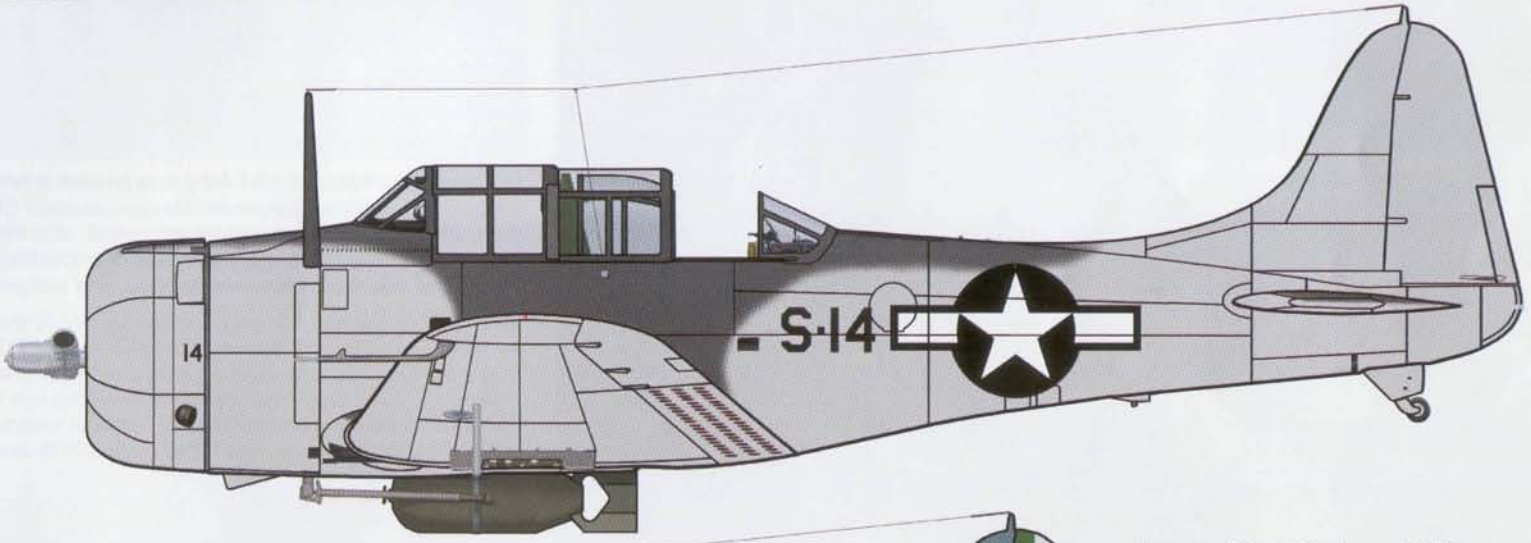

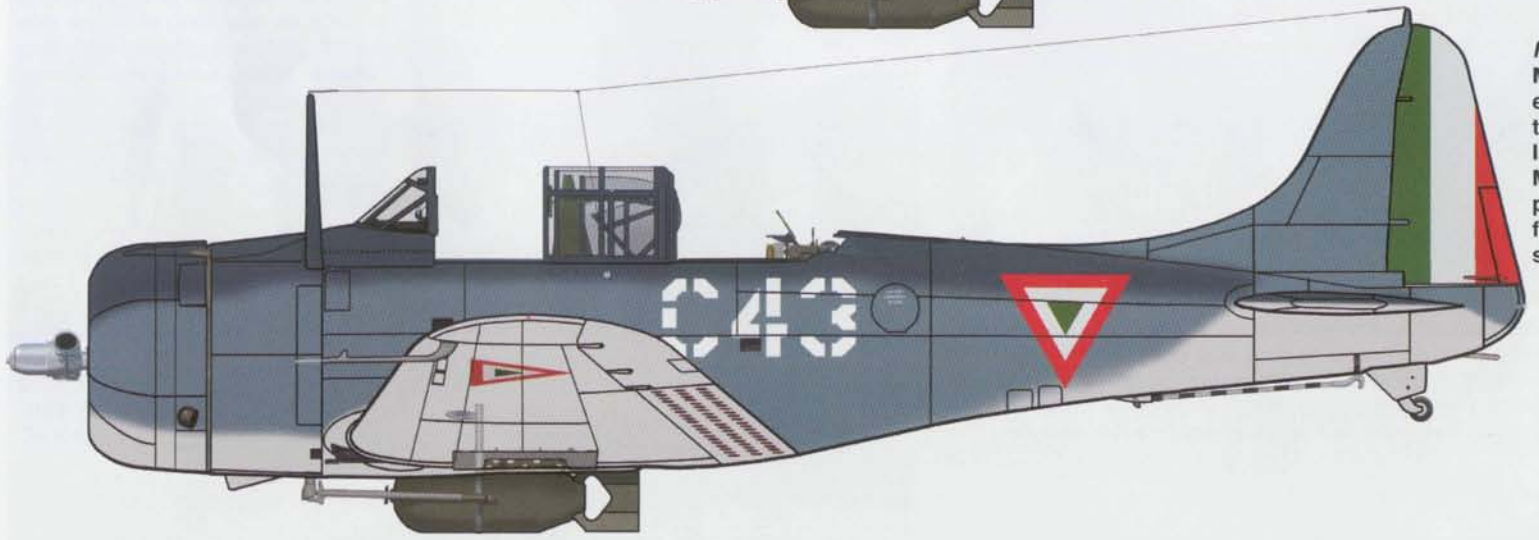

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Two Mexican crewmen pose by the starboard wheel of an A-24B (BID number unknown). The Banshee is painted Olive Drab over Neutral Gray, with the cowling and wing and fuselage bands in NS Orange-Yellow (FS33538). The nose art appears to be a likeness of 'Casper the Friendly Ghost.' (Enrique Velasco via Santiago Flores)

An overall Olive Drab A-24B (BID-2506) makes a coastal patrol flight. The aircraft is equipped with a gun camera support to the right of the windshield. The green, white, and red Mexican national insignias are in six positions, while the serial on the tail is believed to be in Orange-Yellow. (Santiago Flores)

This FAM A-24B (BID-2525) is in the post-war overall natural metal finish, with an Olive Drab anti-glare panel and blue fuselage stripe. Tinted glass is used in the canopy's upper sections; this was unusual for SBDs/A-24s. This Banshee is equipped with a gun camera mount on the starboard side of the fuselage just below the windshield. The *Fuerza Aérea Mexicana* received a total of 30 A-24Bs from the United States in 1943. They flew anti-submarine patrols over the Caribbean during World War Two, then flew training and border patrol missions until their retirement in 1959. (GEN Jose Antonio Rojas Mendoza via Carlos Rojas)

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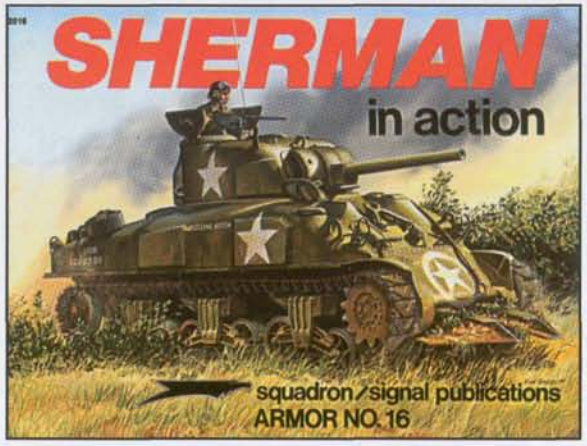
Aircraft in Action

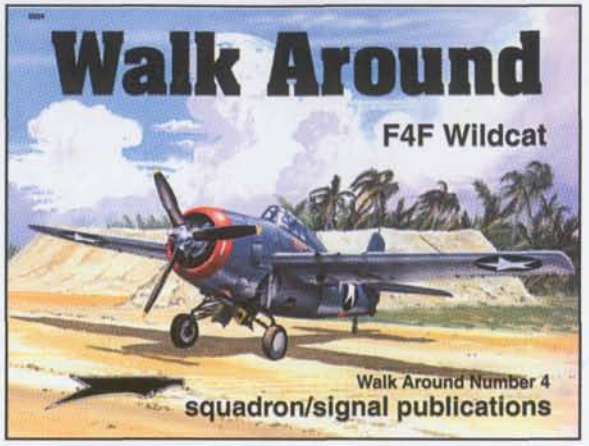
1145 F4U Corsair

Armor in Action



2016 Sherman

Walk Around



5504 F4F Wildcat

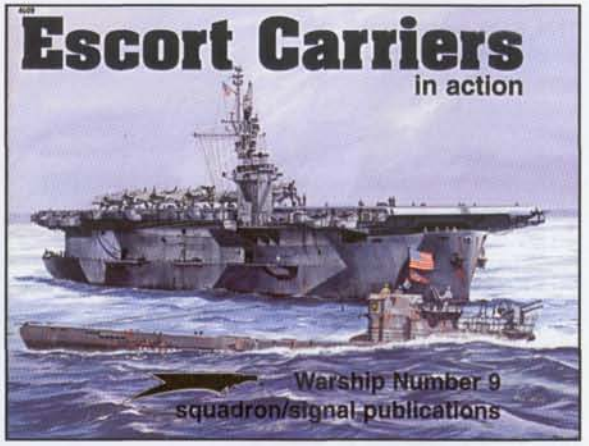
Combat Troops in Action

3002 German Infantry

Detail & Scale

8249 F6F Hellcat

Warships in Action



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